

Calgary



State of Downtown Report 2022-2024



Shaping a Greater Downtown

Where everyone is home

Land Acknowledgment

Downtown Calgary, where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet, is a place of confluence where the sharing of resources, ideas, and opportunities naturally come together.

Indigenous Peoples have their own names for this area that have been in use long before Scottish settlers named this place Calgary. In the Blackfoot language, they call this place, Mohkinstsis. The Îlethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations refer to the Calgary area as Wicispa Oyade and the people of the Tsuut'ina nation call this area Gutsistsl. The Métis call the Calgary area Otokwunee.

We would like to take this opportunity to appreciate and acknowledge that we live, work, and play on the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy, made up of the Siksika, Piikani, Amskaapiikani and Kainai First Nations; the Îlethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The City of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Métis Nation Battle River Territory (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6). We acknowledge all Indigenous Peoples who have made Calgary their home.

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Celebrating Progress, Charting the Future.

A Shared Vision for Downtown Calgary

Downtown is Calgary's economic and cultural heart. It's our central hub for business, innovation, and creativity—a resilient and vibrant place for everyone, with welcoming neighbourhoods, active streets and dynamic public spaces. What happens downtown directly impacts the entire city—a strong core fuels our economy, creates jobs, and helps fund essential City services we rely on every day.

This report highlights the tangible progress we have achieved together as we build a greater downtown. Our shared vision is guided by six pillars:

Civic Heart

Downtown is where we see ourselves as a city and where we showcase Calgary to the world. It's home to our proudest landmarks, our biggest celebrations, and the energy that fuels our future. More than just a geographic centre, it is our engine room, our living room, and the very pulse of Calgary. In this city of possibility, downtown is the confluence of who we are and what we aspire to be.

Creative Commerce

Downtown is at the forefront of retail reinvention, where independent operators and bold new ideas meet the street. Here, local passion merges with global inspiration to create an unexpected and one-of-a-kind shopping experience. Calgary's downtown is transforming from a traditional 9-to-5 corporate zone into an always-on, dynamic community that seamlessly integrates work and lifestyle.

Urban Recreation and Culture

Downtown is where Calgary's rivers meet, open skies stretch endlessly, and urban energy blends with natural beauty. It's not just a place of business—it's a space for active living, wellbeing, and discovery. With kilometres of pathways connecting the core, downtown is a walkable, bikeable, and vibrant destination. Green spaces along the Bow and Elbow Rivers invite exploration, from lookouts and public art to beaches, bridges, islands, and festivals. Downtown is the canvas for Calgary's cultural expression—a place where creativity thrives. It's where past and future intersect, originality meets possibility, and street art shares space with symphonies. From the bold strokes of a mural to the refined sounds of a concert hall, downtown is a cultural confluence where contemporary and classic collide.

Learning and Innovation

Downtown is where opportunity meets possibility. It's the HQ of the new. In downtown, innovation converges with collaboration. We're learning from the past and boldly inventing the future we want as a city. Downtown is a living laboratory where we have space for new thinking and corner offices for opportunity. Fresh notions of success emerge.

Entertainment Hub

Downtown is more vibrant and dynamic than ever, day and night. The spirit of the city pulses through its bars and lounges, live music venues, and entertainment hotspots. Passion and originality are found in every kitchen, creating an unmatched culinary scene. Downtown is life in the night. Stroll from the core to East Village, the Beltline and beyond. Savour the sensations of staying up late.

Investment and Economic Growth

Downtown Calgary is a dynamic centre where businesses flourish, investments take shape, and transformative ideas come to life. From boutique startups to global corporate giants, the downtown core is home to founders, investors, and industry leaders driving innovation across sectors. As the economic heart of Western Canada, downtown Calgary thrives on strategic partnerships and targeted investments that attract businesses and skilled talent.



Thom Mahler
Director, Downtown Strategy
The City of Calgary

On behalf of my colleagues throughout The City of Calgary, I sincerely thank our many partners and champions. Together, we are shaping a greater downtown, and I'm excited about what we will accomplish next.

Downtown by the Numbers.

In 2024, Calgary was ranked **5th** most livable city in the world, and most livable city in North America, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit.¹

106 corporate head offices in Calgary in 2023.² Calgary has the **2nd** highest number of head offices in Canada.²

186 major events and conferences were hosted in Calgary in 2024, generating more than **\$250 Million** in economic impact.³

Breaking down The City's financial incentive programs:

11 approved projects in the Downtown Calgary Development Incentive Program, resulting in **1,498 units**, including **300 units** at below-market rates. **7** office-to-residential projects expected to be completed in 2025.⁴

This program generates more than **\$3.5** of private investment for every **\$1** of public funding.⁴

These projects will provide housing for roughly **2,400 people**.⁴

Calgary's Bow Building is just over 2M square feet



6M SqFt

2031 Goal

2025

Roughly 1M square feet anticipated to be approved for conversion in 2025⁴

2021-2024

1.75M square feet of vacant office space approved for conversion between 2021-2024⁴

\$1.8B

increase in assessed downtown property values since 2022.⁴

Over **1/3**

of new housing units under construction in downtown since 2021 were incentivized by The City's incentive programs.⁴

Over **\$1B**

in public and private investment as a result of The City's four downtown incentive programs.⁴

¹ According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's annual list of the world's most livable cities

² Data retrieved from FP500+800 databases (Top 500+Next 300 largest corporations). Data is released annually in August reflecting numbers from the previous year. This number represents 2022 data.

³ Data provided by Tourism Calgary

⁴ Data provided by City of Calgary

When our downtown thrives, Calgary thrives.



Image courtesy of Roth and Ramberg

The Turning Point

In 2021, City Council made a bold commitment to Calgary's future. The downturn in the energy sector, compounded by the global pandemic, resulted in fewer people working downtown and a \$16B loss in office property value over six years (2015-2021). The impact rippled across the city, shifting property tax burdens onto small businesses and residents in other areas. Recognizing the urgency, The City of Calgary, alongside business and community leaders launched a coordinated strategy to stimulate private investment and revitalize downtown. City Council approved \$200M to support the Greater Downtown Plan, a 10-year, multi-faceted approach to addressing these challenges.

The initiative garnered support from the Government of Alberta, which contributed \$4M through the Downtown Revitalization Grant in 2022, and in 2024 the Government of Canada's Housing Accelerator Fund provided \$52.5 million for the Downtown Development Incentive Program's second round of funding.

Guided by our Downtown Strategy and strengthened by collaboration with public and private sector partners, we have made opportunities to create jobs, drive economic growth, and transform our core. Calgary is evolving, and the momentum is undeniable.

From Plans to Action

The state of downtown is improving every day. Through decisive and deliberate actions from partners working in unison, we see examples of growth in the six pillars of action highlighted in this report.

Civic heart

- Strengthening Calgary's civic heart—from investments in Olympic Plaza to the redevelopment of Eau Claire Plaza, we are building places where Calgarians come to celebrate.
- Building a hub of creative commerce—from creating a pipeline of new homes in office-to-residential conversions to supporting new retailers with infrastructure and services, we are reinventing how people live, work, and shop.

Creative commerce

- Opened new retail stores, including urban grocers, within an evolving 24/7 community
- Stephen Avenue and 8th Street SW transformations are planned for 2025

Urban recreation and culture

- Arts Commons transformation is the largest cultural infrastructure project underway in Canada
- New basketball and pickleball courts, pop-up entertainment spaces, and cultural programming
- Re-imagined Glenbow Museum will put Calgary on the global stage for history, design, architecture, and art

Learning and innovation

- University of Calgary expanding to add 1,200 more students downtown
- SAIT expanding downtown campus to add School for Advanced Digital Technology – SADT
- Downtown is home to more than a dozen post-secondary institutions

Entertainment hub

- Scotia Place will soon become Alberta's newest premier sports and entertainment venue
- Chinook Blast welcomed 433,000 people downtown in 2024
- The 2025 transformation of Cowboys Park, formerly known as Millennium Park, will anchor an entertainment hub in the west end of downtown

Investment and economic growth

- BMO Centre is now the largest convention facility in Western Canada and will bring \$100 million in economic benefits
- From January 2023 to June 2024, 19 office buildings changed hands, with half expected to undergo office-to-residential conversions
- Calgary has 106 head offices—the second highest per city in Canada

Genuine Momentum

Today, Calgary's downtown is beginning to feel reinvigorated with limitless potential, and that is a testament to the dedication of countless individuals and organizations. The results shared in this State of Downtown report speak for themselves; they also show us what we can achieve when we plan, invest, and work together. This report is as much a celebration of success as it is motivation to keep up our efforts. Continued collaboration and investment—from both public and private partners—will be crucial in realizing our vision for a thriving downtown by 2031.

Civic Heart

Calgary has long been a place of hospitality, a gathering point since nations first met at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers. Today, downtown remains our civic heart, where Calgarians and visitors come together. To ensure it continues to be a place where everyone belongs, we are making bold investments that strengthen its role as a vibrant and inclusive urban hub.

One of the most significant examples of this investment is the transformation of Olympic Plaza. Stewarded by CMLC and funded by The City of Calgary, the Government of Alberta, and Dave Werklund & Family, this revitalization honours Calgary's Olympic legacy while reimagining the space as an accessible, arts-focused public gathering place. This project builds on the momentum of downtown revitalization, ensuring that Olympic Plaza remains a landmark of connection, creativity, and community for generations to come.

Just two blocks away, the Central Library continues to push the boundaries of what a public library can be. More than a home for books, it has become a dynamic public space that welcomes more than 1.1 million visitors annually. Each year this busy hub offers 3,500 programs for every age and interest and hosts over 350 events. It is also at the forefront of social innovation, offering initiatives like Wellness Desk, which connects patrons with counsellors who provide free, drop-in mental health and recovery support.

Another evolving downtown space is The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland. Renamed from Fort Calgary in 2024, this site has become a thriving gathering place, hosting everything from youth education programs to large-scale festivals. In late 2024, The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland started piloting an outreach support program in partnership with Alpha House Society, to enhance the safety and wellbeing of everyone who uses the space.

As Calgary invests in the future of its civic heart, we prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all who live, work, and visit downtown. The Extreme Weather Response is a key initiative supporting those in Calgary experiencing homelessness. It provides daytime warming spaces for 425 individuals, as a complement to 24/7 emergency shelter spaces. Additionally, the Downtown Washroom Attendant Program has become a recognized success, maintaining clean and safe public facilities in downtown parks — one of 28 recommendations from the Downtown Safety Leadership Table to improve public safety and support those experiencing vulnerabilities.

Arts Commons: the largest arts-focused infrastructure project underway in Canada will modernize the existing campus and add a new 1,000-seat theatre and a 200-seat studio theatre.

Investing in Downtown's Public Spaces and Experiences

Calgary Public Library

With the support of one-time City funding in 2024, Central Library staff facilitated 192 outdoor activations, drawing 38,462 participants. This funding also allowed for critical security enhancements and staff training, reinforcing the library's role as a safe and welcoming space for all.

Calgary Stampede

In the summer of 2024, the Calgary Stampede broke an all-time attendance record, welcoming 1,477,953 visitors. Investments in public spaces, both on the Stampede grounds and throughout downtown, ensured that guests experienced more than just the midway, contributing to a vibrant and engaging atmosphere across the city.



Image courtesy of Neil Zeller

Calgary TELUS Convention Centre

Marking its 50th anniversary in 2024, the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre remains a cornerstone of Calgary's downtown. As Canada's first purpose-built convention centre, it continues to host major events and celebrations, drawing hundreds of thousands of attendees each year.

Calgary Transit's Community Outreach Team

This innovative partnership between Calgary Transit peace officers and the Alpha House Society outreach team provides crucial support to individuals experiencing vulnerabilities downtown. In 2024, the team conducted 4,811 meaningful client interactions, assisted 29 individuals in securing stable housing, and collaborated with 35 agencies to connect clients with essential resources.

Through strategic investments in public spaces, community programming, and safety initiatives, Calgary's downtown is not just being revitalized—it is being redefined. As the civic heart of our city, downtown continues to be a place where people come together to live, work, play, and celebrate. This is the Calgary we are building: a downtown that is welcoming, innovative, and full of possibility for everyone.

A Father's Promise, A City's Heart.

In 1988, as Calgary embraced the spirit of the Winter Olympics, a young man named Nelson Phillips chose to leave a lasting mark on the place he called home. He purchased a commemorative brick at Olympic Plaza and inscribed it with a simple but meaningful message: **"Meet you here August 16, 1994."** It was a promise to himself—on his 40th birthday, he would come downtown to see his brick.

True to his word, on that August day in 1994, Nelson stood before his brick once more. But he wasn't alone. In his arms, he cradled his newborn daughter, Taylor, sharing with her the legacy he had unknowingly started years before. Their visit captured the essence of the city's spirit—so much so that the Calgary Herald featured them on its front page, a father and daughter at the centre of a place built for shared memories.

Time moves on, as it always does. Olympic Plaza remained a fixture of Calgary's downtown, its bricks weathering the elements for nearly four decades. But as the city prepared for a new transformation, the bricks were carefully removed—many too worn to be salvaged.

By sheer luck, Nelson's brick survived intact. Almost 40 years after it was first placed in the plaza, he returned to claim it, wearing the same Olympic jacket he had worn back in '88 when he volunteered for the games. And in a moment that felt like history coming full circle, he planned to wrap his brick and gift it to Taylor for her 31st birthday. It was more than just a piece of stone. It was a symbol of connection—between past and present, between a father and his daughter, and between the people who make Calgary's downtown more than just a place, but a Civic Heart where memories are made and cherished for generations.

Image courtesy of Parks Foundation



826 8 Street SW

More Than A Game: Elevating Downtown Through Sport, Community, and Connection

The Calgary Surge, the city's professional basketball team, has made an intentional commitment to downtown. In 2024, they partnered with The City of Calgary and Parks Foundation to develop the Century Gardens Sport Court as part of the Downtown Strategy and 8th Street SW Revitalization project. This new amenity enhances both the park and the surrounding streetscape, creating more opportunities for play and gathering.

Beyond infrastructure, The Surge is investing in the spirit of downtown through youth programming in partnership with the Downtown Strategy team.

The team's connection to the city is evident in their community involvement and branding—the iconic helix design of the Peace Bridge is woven into their primary jersey kits. East Village is home to several team members, their official practice facility is the MNP Community & Sport Centre and, in 2024, they hosted a record-breaking game at the Saddledome, setting a new league attendance milestone. Through their dedication to sport, culture, and entertainment, The Surge is shaping the next chapter of downtown's evolution.





BMO Centre Expansion 1912 Flores LaDue Parade SE

The expanded BMO Centre is now Western Canada's largest convention venue, boasting 1 million square feet for hosting conventions, trade shows, special events, and meetings. The 2025 event calendar is packed with major gatherings, including the Rotary International Convention, which is expected to draw 20,000 visitors downtown. The expanded BMO Centre is projected to generate \$100 million in annual economic benefits, further cementing Calgary's downtown as a premier destination for business and tourism.



Image courtesy of CMLC

CRESCENT HEIGHTS

Creative Commerce

We are reinventing retail and business in downtown Calgary to make it a more interconnected hub of commerce and community. Today, City of Calgary incentive programs and industry partnerships are successfully increasing downtown housing while also diversifying job opportunities.

Retail transformation continues on Stephen Avenue, where Value Village Boutique opened in 2024, breathing new life into the historic Clarence Block. This addition has increased foot traffic to the area, and the Calgary Downtown Association is actively partnering with the retailer to promote sustainable shopping through reusing and repurposing clothing as "thrifting" becomes a popular and essential way of life for many people.

For those commuting to downtown, new programs led by Calgary Transit, the Calgary Police Service, and a network of partners are enhancing safety for transit riders, cyclists, and pedestrians.

The commercial real estate sector is also adapting to changing workforce needs. Calgary-based Aspen Properties is reimagining office buildings to cater to the demand for comfortable, collaborative, and creative workspaces. The Edison and Ampersand buildings feature modern tenant lounges, conference facilities, and fitness centres. The Edison goes a step further, offering unique amenities such as a dog park, golf simulator, and basketball court, creating a workplace that fosters productivity and community.

In this rapidly changing landscape, businesses are seizing new growth opportunities. A prime example is Loblaws' expansion, announcing its second major downtown grocery store: No Frills in West Village Towers. Just as its Real Canadian Superstore in East Village serves a growing residential population, this new urban No Frills will provide essential amenities to residents in the west end of downtown and neighbouring communities. Large-scale grocery stores are key components of a thriving and resilient urban neighbourhood, making downtown a more attractive option for residents to call home.

Calgary's downtown is no longer just a place to work—it is a destination where Calgarians can engage in the city's prosperity while experiencing the benefits of a vibrant, complete community.

Calgary Transit

In November 2024, 26 new transit peace officers graduated, marking the successful completion of the peace officer hiring program to support the Public Transit Safety Strategy. In total, Transit Public Safety added over 70 new officers to its team, achieving the target goal of 185 transit peace officers by the end of 2024.

Lot 7 Improvements

The Calgary Downtown Association partnered with the Calgary Parking Authority to enhance one of downtown's most significant surface parking lots. Using CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles, improvements included the installation of fencing, bollards, a secure gate, and enhanced landscaping to improve sightlines and reduce social disorder.

Tech Employment

Calgary saw a 78% increase in tech jobs—the highest growth rate among North American cities. This surge underscores the city's expanding opportunities for skilled talent across sectors. Supported by Platform Calgary, the city's tech ecosystem has reached a valuation of \$8.1 billion and earned a place among the top 50 emerging startup ecosystems globally. In 2022, Calgary company Neo Financial reached "unicorn" status closing a funding round that valued the startup at more than \$1 billion.



🌟 909 5 Avenue SW

Office-to-Residential Conversions

A central component of Calgary’s Downtown Strategy is The City’s four innovative incentive programs.

The City of Calgary is incentivizing converting vacant office space into homes for Calgarians, post-secondary academic spaces to attract more students downtown, hotels, and other uses that revitalize downtown. The City’s programs also incentivize the demolition of end-of-life office buildings and help remove barriers for developers by offsetting the cost of the Plus 15 Fund.

By repurposing underused office buildings into residential spaces, The City is accelerating downtown housing development at a fraction of the cost of new construction while also reducing demolition waste and upgrading aging buildings to meet modern environmental standards.

The Downtown Development Incentive Program, our office-to-residential conversion program, has far exceeded expectations, gaining international recognition for its impact. The program has successfully encouraged private developers to invest in residential conversions by offering \$75 per square foot up to a maximum of \$15 million per project. For every \$1 of public funding, this initiative has generated \$3.5 in private investment.

The first completed project, The Cornerstone, opened in April 2024 and welcomed new residents including Frey, a marketing and graphic design specialist.

“I’ve worked and lived downtown my entire adult life. It really is the place for me,” said Frey. “What do they say in real estate? Location, location, location! The Cornerstone is two blocks away from Prince’s Island Park, two blocks away from the C-train, two blocks from my favourite restaurant, and a few minutes away from Kensington. I love being in the centre of it all.”

Cidex Development is transforming an underutilized site at 425 5 St. S.W. into a 234-unit residential community, set to open in 2028.

“If you don’t have people who are living, working, playing, shopping—doing all of the vital things—in your core, your city just falls to pieces,” said Sarah Itani, Vice President of Development for Cidex. “What I watched happen over the last few years is that Calgarians—from administration, to industry, to everyday people—came together to creatively problem solve.”

Seven more office-to-residential conversion projects are slated for completion in 2025.

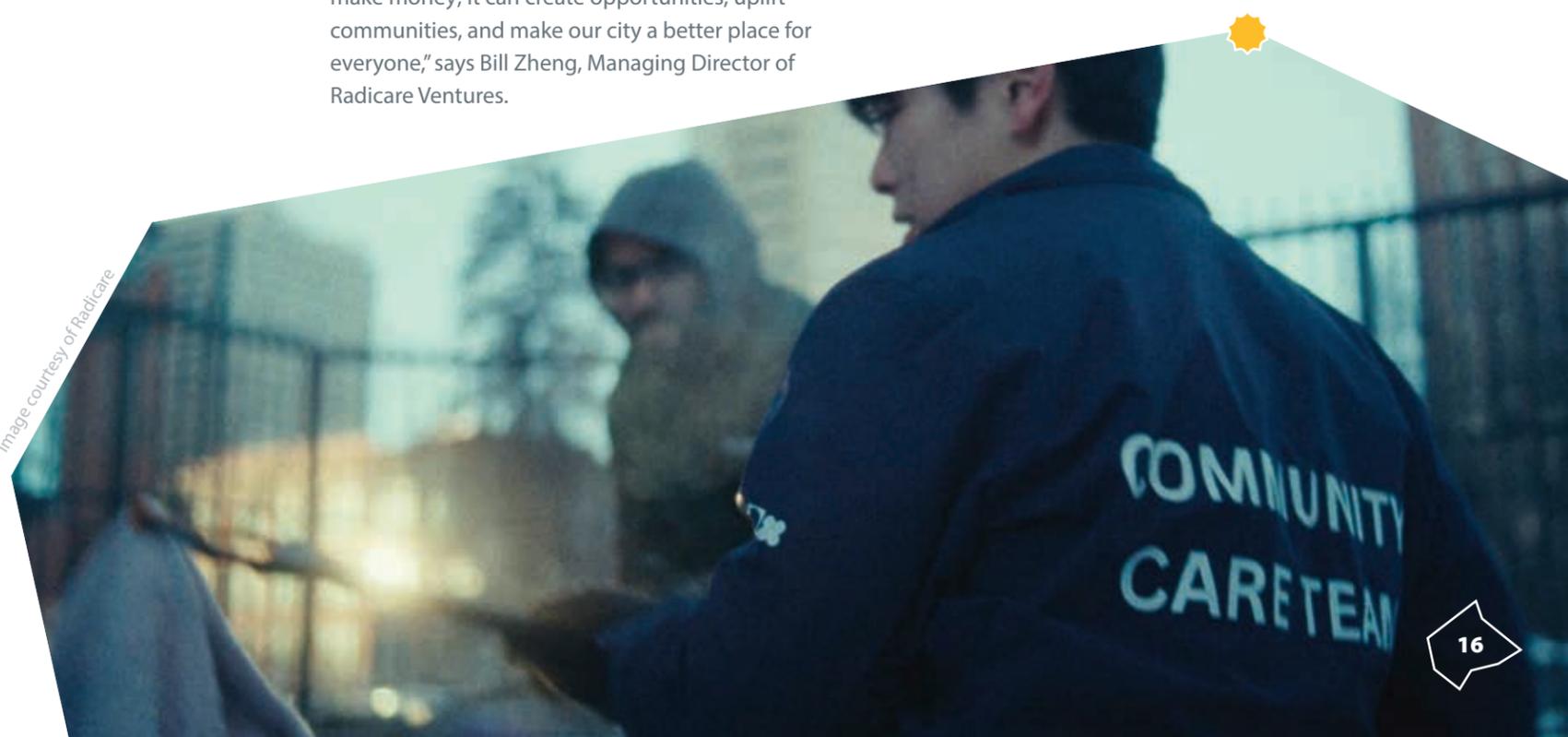
Radicare: Transforming Downtown Calgary Through Cleanliness, Community, and Opportunity

Radicare Ventures is a Calgary-based social enterprise dedicated to providing cleaning and maintenance services while creating employment opportunities for individuals facing systemic barriers. Established in 2023, Radicare Ventures employs clients from community-serving organizations such as The Mustard Seed, Drop-In Centre, and The Alex. As a certified Buy Social Canada enterprise, a minimum of 51 per cent of its profits go directly to its employees and to funding the Calgary Pop-Up Care Village—a festival designed to support people experiencing homelessness and addiction.

“We’re proving that business can do more than just make money; it can create opportunities, uplift communities, and make our city a better place for everyone,” says Bill Zheng, Managing Director of Radicare Ventures.

Radicare Ventures plays an integral role in downtown safety and cleanliness. The enterprise is the official public washroom attendant partner for CMLC in East Village and is responsible for litter and graffiti removal across the Beltline Business Improvement Area. “A well-maintained downtown isn’t just about aesthetics,” says Zheng. “It’s about creating an environment that feels safe, welcoming, and worth visiting. Clean streets and storefronts drive foot traffic, support local businesses, and help shift perceptions of downtown as a place where people want to be. That’s the real impact of what we do every day.”

Image courtesy of Radicare



Urban Recreation and Culture

As Calgary's cultural and recreational hub, downtown is home to world-class institutions like the National Music Centre, Glenbow Museum, and Arts Commons—each drawing global audiences while celebrating local talent. It's also a community rich with parks, pathways, and urban green spaces. For residents, exceptional outdoor spaces like St. Patrick's Island, the River Walk, and River Hall are an extension of their homes. For visitors, they are unique discoveries that showcase Calgary's charm. Year-round festivals further cement downtown as a cultural destination, attracting people from all quadrants of the city and beyond.

Chinatown, a historically significant cultural anchor in downtown Calgary, became a centre of collaboration in 2024. The Chinatown Working Group, representing 10 key organizations with support from The City of Calgary, developed the Next Steps Plan—an essential roadmap for cultural preservation and sustainable growth. Additionally, The City launched the Chinatown Activation Microgrant, providing up to \$2,000 for individuals, businesses, and organizations to host cultural activities. This initiative resulted in 17 community-led projects, engaging nearly 4,000 people and supporting over 70 local businesses.

In the Beltline, Humpy Hollow Park—a beloved green space named for its rolling landscape—underwent a community-driven transformation and reopened in August 2024. The revitalized park along 17th Avenue now features an enclosed off-leash dog park, a covered performance stage, and a central plaza with permanent and movable seating. Nestled beside the historic McHugh House and a striking BUMP mural, Humpy Hollow has become a lively urban retreat for downtown residents.

Major cultural and recreational investments in 2024, supported by all orders of government and private philanthropy, have strengthened downtown's cultural economy, enhanced entertainment offerings, and expanded recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

Pumphouse Park

Renovations for Pumphouse Park began in fall 2024, with completion expected in late 2025. The project includes new picnic areas, outdoor furniture, improved wayfinding, and enhanced accessibility to the Pumphouse Theatre with a new entry path.

Contemporary Calgary

Exciting changes are coming for Contemporary Calgary with the Government of Alberta announcing a \$40-million investment beginning in 2026. The funding will support the final phase of Contemporary Calgary's ambitious Capital Renovation and Expansion Project.

Canada Day 2024

Canada Day 2024 drew over 75,000 attendees for a day of performances by more than 130 local artists, an Indigenous showcase and powwow, the new Cultural Carousel, live music, and fireworks. Festivities spanned The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland, St. Patrick's Island, and Olympic Plaza/Municipal Building.

Los Trompos

Bringing a burst of color and playfulness to downtown, the Calgary Downtown Association and The City of Calgary introduced Los Trompos, an interactive spinning-top installation at Lot 6. Designed for all ages, this engaging public art experience encouraged movement, play, and connection.

The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland

In 2024, Fort Calgary rebranded as The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland to broaden its narrative, reflecting the histories of Indigenous peoples, settlers, the North-West Mounted Police, newcomers, and the land itself. The site now hosts year-round festivals and outdoor recreation while undergoing a major cultural centre transformation, starting with the Ki'pait'apiiyssinnooni (Our Way of Life) exhibit on Blackfoot history and culture.

Calgary Downtown Association – Enhancing Public Spaces

The Calgary Downtown Association, alongside its partners, is enhancing the pedestrian experience through initiatives like graffiti removal, underpass maintenance, and adding "big belly bins" for waste collection along Stephen Avenue.

National Music Centre

Between 2022 and 2024, the National Music Centre (NMC) played a key role in revitalizing downtown Calgary, attracting 373,520 guests from near and far. NMC continues to host free events such as Canada Day, Family Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and the newly introduced Mid-Autumn Festival—all of which saw remarkable attendance growth in 2024. It also hosts the Bruce Springsteen archives!

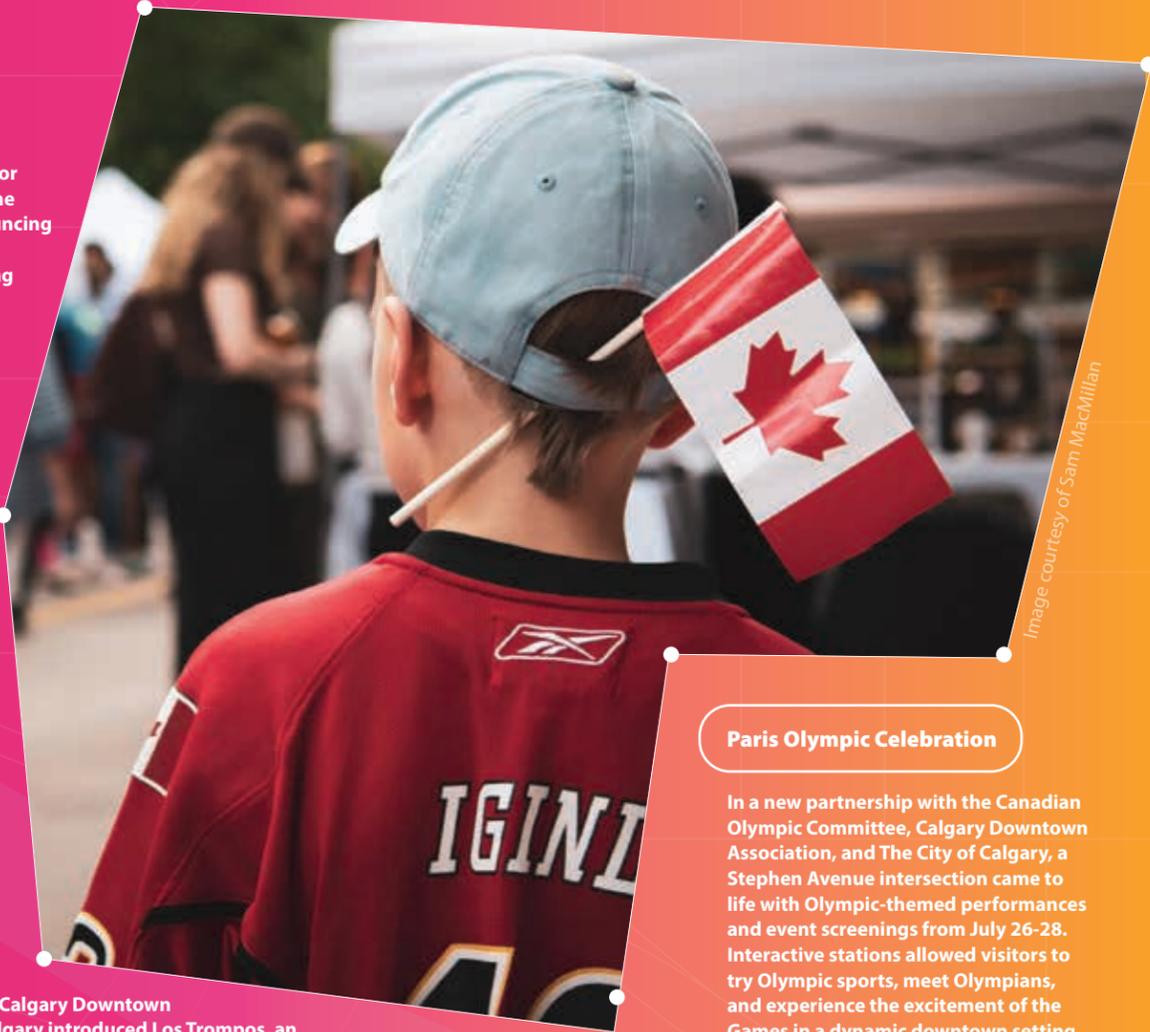


Image courtesy of Sam MacMillan

Paris Olympic Celebration

In a new partnership with the Canadian Olympic Committee, Calgary Downtown Association, and The City of Calgary, a Stephen Avenue intersection came to life with Olympic-themed performances and event screenings from July 26-28. Interactive stations allowed visitors to try Olympic sports, meet Olympians, and experience the excitement of the Games in a dynamic downtown setting.

Walk, Walk, Dance

The Downtown Strategy team and the Calgary Downtown Association introduced 'Walk Walk Dance,' an interactive installation at Harley Hotchkiss Park near the 3rd Street West C-Train Station. Activated 4.2 million times over eight weeks, this playful installation generated music in response to people's movements, turning an everyday commute into a creative experience.

Along the Bow Mural (Chinatown)

Created by local artists Rawry & Pohly, the Along the Bow mural was unveiled on August 17, 2024, at the Chinatown Street Festival. Supported by The City of Calgary and community partners, the artwork reinterprets a 1,000-year-old Chinese scroll, blending Calgary's culture with traditional Chinatown heritage.



Image courtesy of Glassfilm

Transforming Calgary's Cultural Landscape

"My name is Melanie, and I am a born and raised Calgarian. I live downtown in Eau Claire area. I love living downtown, it's vibrant, it's diverse. It's natural, meets modern, and there is always something new to see. There is always new people to meet. There is always an activity to invite people to. We are on the walking path, we are on the river. We can ride our bikes,

do paddle board, and get ice cream. We can come to a new venue that has been established here to meet new people. It is diverse, our people are diverse, our seasons are ever-changing, and the naturalness of this city extends into the downtown. It is essential to keep our parks and the naturalness of our city that grows off the river healthy and vibrant". -Melanie, Downtown Resident

River Hall – Lot 6

Once a simple parking lot along the River Walk, Lot 6 has evolved into a dynamic cultural hub. Investments in infrastructure, strategic partnerships, and thoughtful urban design have transformed it into a key gathering place for Calgary's arts and culture scene. In 2023 and 2024, Lot 6 hosted 14 major festivals, attracting approximately 500,000 attendees.

Collaborations between the Calgary Downtown Association, the University of Calgary's School of Architecture Planning and Design, and multiple City departments led to essential upgrades,

including improved electrical capacity, enhanced amenities, and increased accessibility. These efforts laid the groundwork for River Hall, a pop-up venue designed to host diverse cultural events. As demand for vibrant public spaces continues to grow, Lot 6 stands as a testament to Calgary's commitment to inclusive and engaging urban experiences.



Image courtesy of Lovely & Regan



University of Calgary
906 8 Avenue S.W.

With support from The City's Post-Secondary Institution Incentive Program, the University of Calgary is expanding its downtown presence by converting an underutilized office tower adjacent to Century Gardens. This development will activate the street level for both students and the public and serve as the new home for the university's School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape and its City Building Design Lab. This initiative will bring approximately 1,200 students downtown.



CRESCENT HEIGHTS

Learning and Innovation

In a global competition to be on the leading edge, a downtown founded with an innovation mindset has the advantage. Schools, including Bow Valley College, SAIT, and the University of Calgary, are evolving and expanding their downtown footprint. In doing so, they are reducing vacant and underused office space, increasing economic activity, and enhancing the safety and vibrancy of downtown. Today, more than a dozen post-secondary institutions operate in the downtown core.

Increases in housing—from new towers in East Village to office-to-residential conversions throughout downtown—enable students to live, learn, and work in the heart of the city. Each student living and studying downtown adds to the energy of its entertainment, recreation, shopping, and cultural scenes, making downtown a thriving and diverse community.

SAIT is committed to the vibrancy of downtown and has been part of the downtown community since 2012. In 2017, SAIT opened a living classroom in The Tastemarket Canadian Kitchen and in 2024, SAIT announced a 19,000-square-foot expansion of its downtown campus, housing elements of the School for Advanced Digital Technology. This expansion strengthens Calgary's leadership in cybersecurity, fostering collaboration with industry and providing work-integrated learning opportunities for students. These developments ensure that education, innovation, and lifelong learning remain central to Calgary's downtown identity.

EAST VILLAGE

Platform Calgary

From its headquarters in downtown Calgary, Platform Calgary is making the city one of the best places in the world for anyone to start and grow a tech business. It actively fosters a thriving tech ecosystem by providing mentorship, training tech founders, and connecting startups with a young and growing workforce.

Gold-certified Traffic Management

Minimizing disruptions and maintaining a safe and efficient traffic flow is essential for a large and growing city like Calgary. The City's Mobility Operations Centre (MOC) is recognized as a standard of excellence in traffic management, operating 24/7 to effectively monitor and adjust the network. Innovative tools such as drones, adaptive signal timing and a real-time dashboard ensure a more efficient traffic flow compared to other cities. These efforts enhance safety and the overall commuter experience for those who work, live, and visit downtown.

Bow Valley College Levels Up Downtown with Calgary's First Esports Arena

Bow Valley College (BVC) has been part of Calgary's downtown since 1965 and serves more than 15,000 students, many of whom study at its main campus across the street from Calgary City Hall.

In 2024, BVC launched Calgary's first Esports Arena, a hub for competition, innovation, and game development. This marked a major step in Calgary's participation in the global esports and digital entertainment industry.

The Esports Arena is part of the college's Digital Entertainment Nexus, which aims to train 675 people and support the growth of 125 companies by 2028, contributing to Canada's \$5.5 billion gaming industry. This initiative will drive innovation, expand career opportunities, and foster entrepreneurial ventures in the creative sector, while also acting as a catalyst for economic growth and diversification across the region.



Innovating Justice: How Calgary's Community Court is Fostering Healing and Rehabilitation

Innovation in downtown isn't limited to academia. Community Court is a partnership between The City of Calgary and Calgary Legal Guidance.

This innovative approach to justice connects Calgarians experiencing vulnerabilities with a court diversion process to resolve bylaw infractions. People charged with bylaw infractions may be directed to community programs as an alternative to fines or other punitive sanctions.

The goal of the program is to set individuals on a path towards rehabilitation and stabilization. Anyone experiencing vulnerabilities who has charges under any municipal bylaw is welcome to attend to devise a plan to resolve charges. The program runs on the last Wednesday of every month at the Alberta Court of Justice.

Community Court brings together partners from Calgary Police Service, Calgary Community Standards and Transit Safety officers, as well as Alberta Justice and the social service sector to disrupt the revolving door facing many Calgarians struggling with trauma, addiction, mental health, and/or homelessness as underlying causes of justice system involvement.

Some anticipated outcomes of the Community Court are improvements in public safety and quality of life for individuals and community and reduced demand on the traditional justice system.

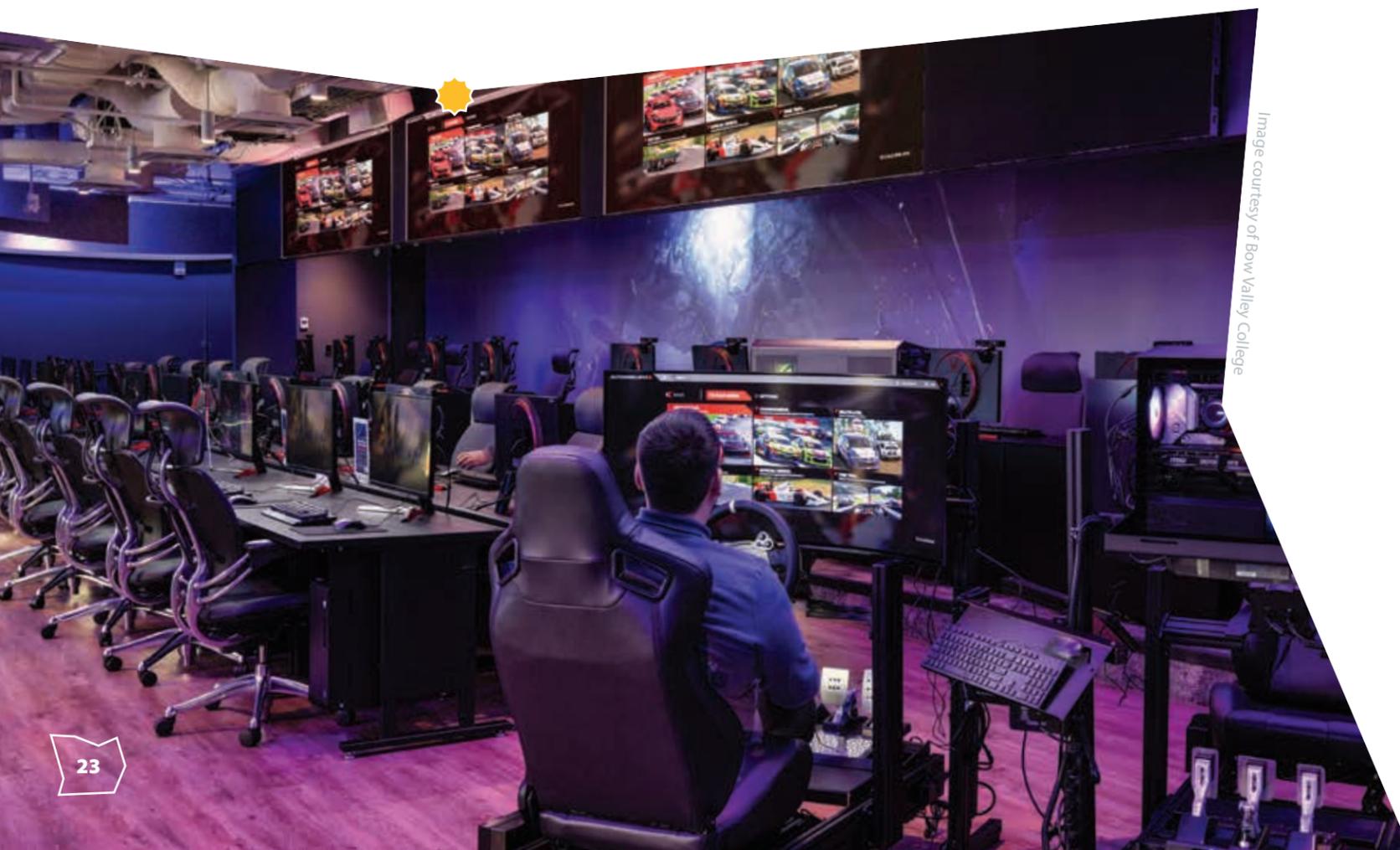


Image courtesy of Bow Valley College



BUMP 1331 Macleod Trail SE

Launched in 2017 as the Beltline Urban Murals Project, BUMP Festival has grown into Calgary's most extensive public art initiative. The festival continues to reshape downtown neighbourhoods with cutting-edge murals and public programming. In 2024, BUMP added 83 unique artworks to the cityscape while expanding into a year-round festival featuring mural tours, live performances, community events, and an urban art conference.

Image courtesy of Colin Way



#ExploreDowntownYYC

Since 2023, The City of Calgary and its partners have run a joint digital marketing campaign to showcase downtown's unique offerings. In 2024, the campaign reached more than 2.3 million people, leveraging social media, local influencers, a dynamic website, digital and traditional media, guerrilla marketing, and experiential activations to highlight restaurants, shops, and cultural attractions.

Historic Fire Hall #1

From June to December 2024, The City of Calgary hosted 34 free community events at the vacant Historic Fire Hall #1. Activities ranged from weekly kids' days and markets to live performances, drawing both residents and visitors to this underused downtown space while enhancing its cultural and street-level vibrancy.

Downtown Safety Leadership Table

The Downtown Safety Leadership Table convened key downtown interest holders to develop strategies for enhancing safety in Calgary's core. In March 2024, the group released 28 recommendations—each of which The City of Calgary and its partners are actively implementing to create a safer, more welcoming downtown for all.

Streetlights and Public Safety

Ensuring the downtown area is well-lit is crucial for public safety, improving sightlines and contributing to a feeling of wellbeing and safety for everyone. The City ensures timely responses to streetlight outages, maintaining a 98% operational rate for over 4,500 streetlights downtown. Little thought of but very important, well-managed streetlights significantly enhance the safety, attractiveness, and overall welcoming environment of Calgary's downtown.

Seasonal Patios

The City's patio program, which allows businesses to have temporary patios in public spaces during the warmer months, enhances downtown vibrancy and social connection, transforming these areas into "living rooms of the city." The program focuses on accessibility and safety, featuring clear pathways and safety barriers adorned with local art to help foster a secure and welcoming environment for all.

Entertainment Hub

A thriving downtown is a 24/7 entertainment hub, and strategic investments ensure it remains a magnet for those seeking excitement—or a vibrant place to call home. By fostering an environment where award-winning restaurants and unique bars flourish, downtown continues to attract steady foot traffic from visitors and residents alike.

Beyond large-scale projects, daily programming breathes life into downtown streets. Festivals, buskers, and pop-up art installations create engaging experiences that draw people in.

One of the most significant investments taking shape is Scotia Place: Calgary's new event centre, located in the emerging Culture + Entertainment District. The design is influenced by Indigenous voices reflecting Calgary and Alberta's natural environment and its additional focus on accessibility, climate action, and visitor experience creates a dynamic hub accessible to everyone. This industry-leading facility provides indoor and outdoor gathering spaces for Calgarians and visitors to the District—serving as an entertainment magnet that attracts revelers to the greater downtown.

From pop-up shops to flagship stores, downtown continues to welcome new retail driven by a growing residential and visitor base. These investments and collaborations have paid off, driving consistent growth in foot traffic and consumer spending and attracting tens of thousands of visitors to Stephen Avenue and beyond.

EAST VILLAGE

Chinook Blast: Calgary's Winter Wonderland of Art, Fun, and Community

As winter blankets Calgary in a shimmering layer of snow, the city comes alive with the magic of Chinook Blast—Calgary's signature winter festival. Launched in January 2021, this festival has grown into a beloved citywide celebration that unites residents, tourists, and the vibrant community of artists, nonprofits, and local businesses. It's a place where everyone can find their own unique winter experience, filled with fun activities and enchanting moments.

Each year, Chinook Blast transforms downtown into a lively canvas of art and entertainment, drawing visitors from near and far. In 2024, the festival welcomed over 433,000 attendees, marking a remarkable 16% increase in participation. This growth reflects the festival's evolving appeal, with more than 1,700 creative makers, businesses, and community organizations contributing to its success. Spearheaded by Calgary Arts Development, Calgary Economic Development, The City of Calgary, and Tourism Calgary, Chinook Blast is Calgary's Winter City Strategy in action.

"Chinook Blast has become a cornerstone of Calgary's winter identity, celebrating the vibrant talent and creativity that define our city," said Patti Pon, Chair of Chinook Blast, and President and CEO of Calgary Arts Development.

The festival's charm lies not only in its spectacular performances and interactive installations but also in the spirit of togetherness it fosters. Residents and tourists alike revel in the opportunity to experience the city's winter wonderland, with unique activities that celebrate Calgary's cultural heartbeat.

To keep the winter spirit alive, The City of Calgary launched the Winter City Design Competition in partnership with Chinook Blast. This initiative invites designers, artists, and students to reimagine downtown's winter public spaces, ensuring that Calgary remains vibrant and inviting even in the coldest months.



Image courtesy of Cindy McLeod

Transforming the West End of Downtown into a thriving Entertainment Hub

Summer 2024 marked the transformation of a beloved downtown space into Cowboys Park, formerly known as Millennium Park. This transition came through a 10-year naming and sponsorship agreement between The City of Calgary and Cowboys, a business with nearly 30 years of history in downtown Calgary. Starting in 2025, Cowboys Park will be the official home of the Cowboys Music Festival, a world-renowned event expected to draw over 100,000 visitors to enjoy live music spanning multiple genres on the Cowboys Stage.

"The evolution to Cowboys Park and the planned infrastructure improvements will ensure that this space remains a dynamic and accessible destination," said Mayor Jyoti Gondek. "Providing an event-ready space reflects our commitment to a downtown that thrives year-round, offering Calgarians and visitors alike a place to connect, enjoy, and experience the best of our city's arts and cultural offerings."



Image courtesy of Neil Zeller

Investment and Economic Growth

A strong and resilient downtown must be a thriving hub of business and innovation. Collaboration between the private and public spheres creates the right environment for growth and opportunity.

In 2024, City of Calgary civic partner Calgary Economic Development helped secure transformative investments across multiple sectors, reinforcing the city's reputation as a business-friendly environment with a highly skilled talent pool. Global cybersecurity leader Fortinet committed to a \$30-million expansion in downtown Calgary, while Metlen Energy and Metals announced its first Canadian headquarters in Calgary following a significant investment in Alberta's renewable energy sector. These investments, combined with initiatives like the Blue Sky City brand launch, signal Calgary's growing prominence as a global destination for business and innovation.

Calgary's downtown real estate landscape is evolving with motivation from The City's Downtown Development Incentive Program. From January 2023 to June 2024, 19 office buildings changed hands, with half expected to undergo office-to-residential conversions, according to Colliers' 2024 Q3 Downtown Office Market Report. These conversions reduce underutilized office space while businesses relocate to higher-quality AA and A-Class buildings, creating a more dynamic and vibrant downtown core.

Alongside this growth, Alberta's innovation and tech sector continues to expand. Province-wide, the sector saw a 157% increase in tech companies since 2012 with over 60% of those headquartered in Calgary, according to the Alberta Enterprise Corporation 2023 Deal Flow Study. This highlights the city's position as a leading hub for technology and economic growth.

One standout deal included Calgary-based fintech startup Neo Financial Technologies, which raised \$112 million in a Series D round from prominent Canadian founders and entrepreneurs. Including this example, Calgary-based tech companies secured \$630 million across 63 deals in 2024. That is over \$100 million more than the previous year, maintaining Calgary's position as the fourth highest Canadian city for venture capital investment behind Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Calgary accounted for 90% of Alberta's venture capital investment, reflecting its growing appeal to investors.

Downtown Flood Protection

In 2023, The City of Calgary completed the Downtown Flood Barrier, a 1.39-kilometre structure designed to withstand a 1-in-200-year flood event, protecting the downtown core from disasters like the 2013 flood—the costliest natural disaster in Canadian history at the time.



Infrastructure Investments

Major infrastructure upgrades enhance mobility and access to downtown, including the \$12.5M rehabilitation of the 4th Avenue Flyover and the recent rebuilding of Jaipur Bridge, which connects to the redesigned Eau Claire Plaza opening this summer.

Alberta Ecotrust's Climate Innovation Fund

Alberta Ecotrust invested \$1M in Calgary's downtown in 2024, supporting sustainable urban renewal. A key project is Astra Group's Place 800 office-to-residential conversion, creating energy-efficient housing with some units offered at below-market rates.

Suncor Energy Centre

Brookfield Properties and ARCI Investments announced a \$90 million renovation of Suncor Energy Centre in late 2024, repositioning it as a mixed-use property with a 9,000-square-foot food hall, 400-seat amphitheatre, 33,000 square feet of tenant amenities, and a micro-mobility hub.

Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC)

Through the East Village Master Plan, CMLC has invested over \$400 million in public infrastructure, public spaces, and placemaking initiatives—catalyzing over \$3 billion in private investment. In 2024, CMLC announced developer partnerships to build more than 400 new homes starting in 2025, with 900 homes in the pipeline.



Image courtesy of Andrew Bain

Major Investments Fuel Cultural and Economic Growth

Two blocks of Stephen Avenue now represent over \$860 million in investment in Calgary's cultural economy, thanks to contributions from all levels of government and private donors. The Glenbow Museum and Arts Commons, both cornerstone institutions in Calgary's arts and culture landscape, are at the heart of downtown's transformation.

Meanwhile, the Glenbow Museum's renovation continues, with the newly named JR Shaw Centre for Arts and Culture set to reopen in 2026. The revitalized museum will feature galleries on all eight floors, a 13,000-square-foot rooftop terrace, a new theatre, and retail and dining spaces. Most notably, admission will be free, thanks to the \$25 million JR Shaw Free Admission Endowment.

The Arts Commons Transformation project broke ground in 2024, marking the start of a major expansion. The project will add a 1,000-seat theatre and a 200-seat studio theatre, and will also include renovations to the existing campus. Over the past three years, venue usage at Arts Commons has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, and demand is expected to grow as the facility expands.

These cultural investments reflect a powerful public-private collaboration that will not only revitalize downtown but also strengthen Calgary's standing as a world-class cultural hub.

Calgary's Downtown Strategy Goes Global

Sparking international interest, inspiring visionaries

Calgary's Downtown Strategy is earning international recognition as cities worldwide look for ways to revitalize their urban cores. In April 2024, a delegation of 60 downtown Denver decision-makers, project managers, and community leaders visited Calgary to learn from its successes.

The delegation was particularly interested in Calgary's leadership in office conversions and incentive programs that drive private investment.

They also examined how a comprehensive downtown strategy can transform a traditional business district into a resilient, thriving community.

"There's some beautiful lessons to learn here in Calgary," said Downtown Denver Partnership CEO Kourtney Garrett. "Looking at those intentional moves that are carrying some of the challenges we have short term and thinking about downtown in the next five, 10, 15 years."



Image courtesy of CMIC



Economic and Cultural Heart of Calgary



Greater Downtown is the economic and cultural heart of Calgary. It is a resilient and vibrant place for everyone, with welcoming neighbourhoods, active streets, and well-used public spaces.



Champions

Our success over the past three years has been because of the individual, collective, and collaborative efforts of downtown's champions, many of whom are listed below. This list is not exhaustive, and we recognize there are many who contribute to the success of downtown. Future work will be dependent on this same collective effort.

Alberta Ecotrust Foundation

Alpha House Society

Ampersand

ARCI Investments

Arts Commons

Aspen Properties

Astra Group Place

BMO Centre

Bow Valley College

Brookfield Properties

Calgary Arts Development Authority

Calgary Chamber of Commerce

Calgary Downtown Association

Calgary Economic Development

Calgary Municipal Land Corporation

Calgary Public Library

Calgary Stampede

Calgary Surge

Central Library

Contemporary Calgary

Glenbow Museum

Loblaws Companies Ltd.

National Music Centre

OPUS

Platform Calgary

Radicare Ventures

School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape (SAPL)

University of Calgary

Scotia Place

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)

Calgary TELUS Convention Centre

The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland

The Edison

Tourism Calgary

University of Calgary

Value Village Boutique

Shaping a Greater Downtown

Where everyone is home