

## The Revitalization of **The Rivers District** in Calgary

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The Right Honourable Paul Martin  
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Ralph Klein  
Premier of Alberta



THE CITY OF  
**CALGARY**  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to provide you with our vision of a revitalized Rivers District in the heart of Calgary. The site of the city's birthplace and once a thriving residential and business community, The Rivers district covers the entire east end of downtown, and includes some of Calgary's most popular destination attractions: the Zoo, Fort Calgary, and Stampede Park.

Unfortunately, much of the area is characterized by **urban blight**, with crime and social concerns and inadequate infrastructure. Many attempts have been made over the past 30 years to revitalize this area, all without success.

The Rivers revitalization must begin with infrastructure upgrades and improvements. With the support of all three orders of government, The Rivers can once again be a thriving, safe and sustainable inner city community.

We believe that the initial public investment in infrastructure for this area of our downtown will result in significant returns in private sector investment and social, environmental and financial benefits to the community.

These benefits include brownfield reclamation and riverbank reclamation and enhancement. This public sector investment would also support the development plans of some of Calgary's most popular destination attractions, creating an entertainment/cultural district. It would create the opportunity for an expanded presence of post-secondary learning in the downtown.

Most importantly, it would bring together many stakeholders (public, private and not-for-profit) to create a vibrant mixed-use urban community in an area that is currently plagued by urban blight.

Recent consultations with stakeholders have shown there is considerable interest in revitalization of the area with a coordinated development approach. The time is right to advance and implement a coordinated, multi-partner strategy to reclaim, revitalize and re-energize The Rivers.

Together, we can create a thriving inner city community that is once again the heart of downtown Calgary.

Respectfully yours,

Dave Bronconnier  
Mayor  
City of Calgary

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Calgary's Rivers district, the city's birthplace and once a thriving residential and business community, covers the entire east end of downtown. Some of Calgary's most popular destination attractions are located here, including the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede, the Zoo, Fort Calgary, and the proposed new Science Centre.

Much of The Rivers is now an area of urban blight, a decaying, deserted area with long-standing crime and social concerns, brownfield lands, inadequate infrastructure, and access problems.

But The Rivers also includes some of Calgary's most desirable 'waterfront' property, spoiled by generally unwelcoming, unappealing and unsafe pathways and access points.

The Rivers revitalization is a public infrastructure program that would 'kick start' the reclamation, redevelopment and revitalization of the area.

Consultations with stakeholder groups have indicated that the time is right to move forward with simultaneous redevelopment plans.

The overall revitalization of the district would support and complement the redevelopment plans of the Stampede, and other destination attractions; enable private sector development projects; and encourage inner city locations for educational and cultural organizations, such as the University of Calgary.

## Priority 'kick start' projects

Based on the input of stakeholder groups, the following priority projects were identified as key to 'kick starting' revitalization, and creating the critical mass of redevelopment needed to attract new private and public sector investment:

- East Village infrastructure improvements, upgrades and redevelopment,
- A Riverwalk pathway network that reclaims the riverbank, and links up with the Stampede's proposed riverwalk
- A new connector / underpass on 4<sup>th</sup> Street S.E. to alleviate access problems to, from and through the area



#### Other projects that will be required:

- Environmental remediation and riverbank reclamation
- Affordable housing
- Relocation of The City's Transit Centre
- A pedestrian and bicycle network
- Transportation management systems

With support from all three levels of government, The Rivers can once again be a thriving, safe and vibrant inner city community. The City will do its share through the innovative use of Tax Increment Funding, development levies, and the strategic use of City-owned land.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



### **Public sector investment will produce lasting benefits for all stakeholders**

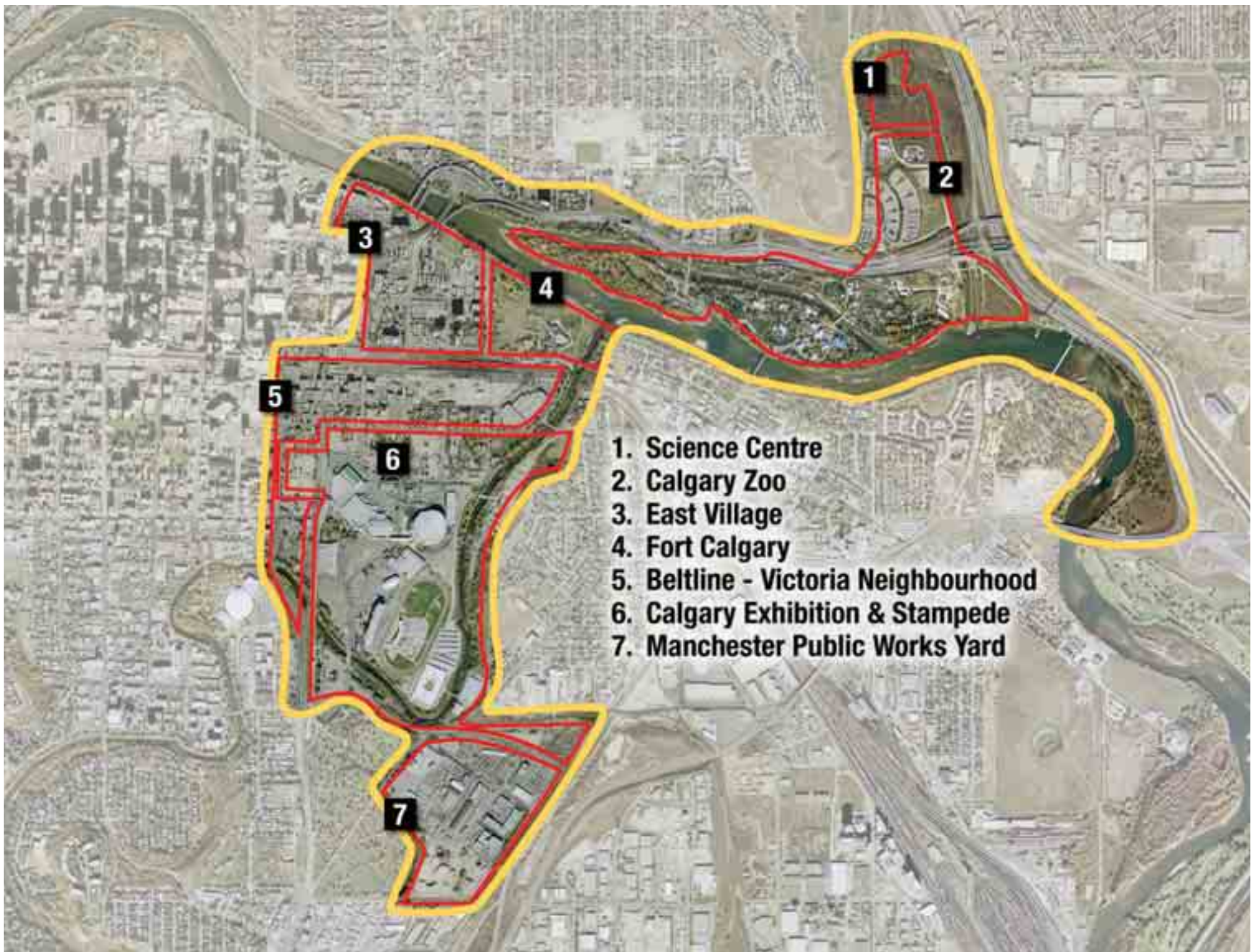
Significant social, environmental and economic benefits would result from this public sector investment. Most important, it would bring together many stakeholders – public, private and not-for-profit – to turn a blighted, crime-ridden inner city area into a desirable, sustainable community once again.

Brownfield properties and damaged riverbank green spaces would be reclaimed and enhanced. There will be an opportunity to create a strong post-secondary learning presence in downtown Calgary. And, by supporting the development plans of some of Calgary's most popular destination attractions, this public sector 'kick start' investment would help create a vibrant entertainment / cultural district.

Stakeholder and community groups have indicated that the timing is right for a simultaneous, multi-front revitalization of The Rivers. But they have also expressed concern that, if the public sector does not take the lead in providing the necessary infrastructure improvements – the 'kick start' catalysts - this momentum will surely be lost.

**And much of the area within The Rivers district will slide even deeper into decline and decay.**





- 1. Science Centre
- 2. Calgary Zoo
- 3. East Village
- 4. Fort Calgary
- 5. Beltline - Victoria Neighbourhood
- 6. Calgary Exhibition & Stampede
- 7. Manchester Public Works Yard

# I. VISION / MISSION



## THE VISION

It's 2025 and the vision for the revitalization of The Rivers area has become a reality. The City of Calgary and its numerous public, private and community partners have created a centre – a heart – where the rivers meet.

The Rivers embraces the past and revitalizes the present by offering a dynamic, urban lifestyle – a place where energy, education, and vitality join, and where culture and heritage are celebrated.

The Rivers is an environment for a diverse group of people from all backgrounds and walks of life, one that provides them with a choice of employment, business, recreation, housing and attraction opportunities.

At the same time, the environment and open spaces are restored and enhanced. The Rivers is now a place where the citizens of Calgary, and visitors from around the world, can relax and connect with nature, while only moments away, a number of world-class attractions, dining experiences and specialty shops and boutiques await.

The Rivers experiences are endless.





# THE MISSION

The Rivers Revitalization Strategy creates a vibrant community in which all citizens share a sense of belonging and pride, that connects Calgary’s diverse people with a variety of cultural, residential, natural and recreational districts located along and at the convergence of the Bow and Elbow rivers.

This will be achieved by establishing a development framework based on stakeholder participation, and the formation of partnerships between The City of Calgary, the Federal and Provincial Governments, private sector partners, community organizations and citizens.

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# I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The redevelopment strategy for The Rivers district has been based on the following guiding principles:

**1. Create and ensure a sustainable environment by:**

- Supporting, preserving, protecting and enhancing open spaces, natural features, built heritage and sensitive environment areas within The Rivers
- Remediating brownfield sites planned for redevelopment

**2. Promote and support mixed land uses, a community wherein Calgarians can live, work and play by:**

- Promoting distinctive, attractive districts with strong individual identities, districts that take advantage of the features that make The Rivers special, such as the Bow and Elbow rivers and Nose Creek, heritage sites, and educational, cultural and recreational facilities and activities
- Keeping homes, jobs, recreation and shopping areas convenient and close together, thus reducing the need to drive
- Encouraging diversity, vitality and a sense of community by creating a range of housing choices to meet different lifestyle needs and incomes

**3. Provide public parks and open spaces where people can be relaxed, refreshed and restored by:**

- Creating safe, attractive and enjoyable walking environments for pedestrian use

- Creating a well-connected public area where residents and visitors can easily access the natural river and creek landscapes

**4. Develop communities with a strong sense of identity and belonging, where people feel safe and secure, by:**

- Ensuring public enjoyment and safety are priorities when developing and designing the streets, parks and open spaces and other public places
- Creating an environment that promotes a lively and interactive urban community

**5. Connect people with places through a variety of transportation choices by:**

- Ensuring movement in and around the area by making the best use of existing and proposed roads, while protecting our neighbourhoods and environments
- Ensuring there are safe, viable and efficient alternatives to driving vehicles
- Creating a variety of experiences, both urban and natural, to be 'discovered' by pedestrians throughout every season of the year



**6. Promote innovation and excellence in urban design by:**

- Giving priority to public space and its design as a way of preserving and enhancing important historical characteristics of the area
- Ensuring that The River's precincts integrate with the surrounding city context and nearby neighbourhoods
- Focusing public life on the street and giving special consideration to sidewalk beautification and street art
- Encouraging a high degree of architectural distinction in all new public and private building design

**7. Actively encourage an economic environment that supports tourism and a wide range of employment and business development opportunities by:**

- Creating a community where people want to do business
- Establishing collaborative relationships that will promote and support the development of new educational, cultural and business opportunities

**8. Manage finances and assets responsibly, ensuring accountability through a transparent and responsive planning and decision-making process, now and in the future, by:**

- Working together with stakeholders – other orders of government, the private sector, community organizations and citizens - to establish and maintain an equitable, long-term cost-sharing of redevelopment infrastructure, services and facilities
- Encouraging and responding to citizen participation in development decisions

**9. Forge new links and relationships between The Rivers partners and their project boundaries, by:**

- Developing links between existing master plans and new development initiatives, to create synergies that collectively benefit all stakeholders
- Enabling the establishment of relationships between the public and private sectors
- Establishing new connections between new and existing communities and developments



## II. THE OPPORTUNITY

Ask any Calgarian where downtown is, and likely he / she will reply that it's west of City Hall, north of the tracks, south of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and east of 10<sup>th</sup> Street.



**But this wasn't always the case.**

Calgary first established itself as a community on the spit of land where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet, about where the CP tracks are now. And historically, the area east of City Hall, all the way across the Elbow River into the communities of Inglewood and Ramsay, was once a vibrant residential, cultural and commercial neighbourhood.

Not any more.

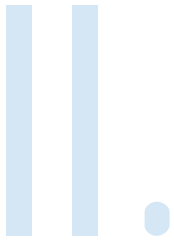
What used to be a thriving community is now a patchwork of noisy public works operations; dangerous, deserted streets; contaminated land; attractions that draw visitors only during daylight hours; a few bullish and leading-edge businesses; about 800 seniors; one thousand homeless living in the three shelters; and 200 residents of new condo complexes and the few remaining houses in the area.

Two words: **urban blight.**

**But Calgary's Rivers district can once again be a thriving, safe and vibrant inner city community, one that celebrates diversity and honours our heritage, culture, and educational opportunities, while respecting and sustaining our built and natural environments.**

**Providing The City of Calgary takes the lead to make it happen.**





## How will Calgary and Calgarians benefit from the revitalization of The Rivers district?

- The area will be rejuvenated, recognized once again as a desirable community, one that provides a unique blend of residential, recreational, cultural, commercial and environmental attractions
- It will complete Calgary's downtown, it will make it whole
- Distinct character areas and residential districts will be celebrated
- Brownfield remediation and environmental mitigation will be done
- Riverbanks will be reclaimed
- Natural and built heritage will be protected and preserved
- Master plans and development initiatives will be linked to create synergies that benefit all stakeholders
- Adjacent residential neighbourhoods will be enhanced
- Private sector investment will not only be supported, it will be actively encouraged
- Calgary's economy, especially the tourism industry, will benefit significantly
- Jobs will be created both during the redevelopment, and once The Rivers is a thriving community
- All Calgarians will enjoy easy access to new, vibrant, safe and accessible public spaces



### III. THE CHALLENGE



The timing is right.



Several innovative, expansive master plans for attractions located in The Rivers district - Stampede Park, the Zoo, Fort Calgary and the new Science Centre - are being implemented, public sector investment in facility enhancements that will surely spark renewed interest, and bring new visitors to the area.

Before the attractions can go ahead with their expansion plans, and before any contaminated land anywhere in The Rivers can be redeveloped, these brownfield sites must be cleaned up.

And they will be. Providing The City takes the lead to make it happen.

Development and investment plans are in the works, too, for an 'Urban Campus' of the University of Calgary, possibly in conjunction with new downtown facilities for SAIT, Mount Royal, Bow Valley College, Alberta College of Art and Design and the Calgary Health Region. Another possible project would be a theatre / rehearsal hall complex - serving the Stampede's show band and Young Canadians, and the U of C's Faculty of Fine Arts, for example.

But before these projects can go ahead, access to, from and through the area must be improved. A new underpass must be built on 4<sup>th</sup> Street S.E., linking the areas north and south of the CP rail lines, and providing



vehicular and pedestrian connections between East Village, the Beltline, the attractions zone, and Stampede Park.

It must be built, and it will be. Providing The City takes the lead to make it happen.

The Rivers needs people, about 20,000 people, who live in and care about their neighbourhood.

Private investors must be encouraged to build a variety of housing projects in the area, including affordable housing.

Those investors will only consider The Rivers district if the infrastructure is in place to support a vastly expanded population. Upgraded or enhanced roads, water and sewer systems, parks, pathways, public spaces and open areas: all will be needed to 'kick start' private development.

The infrastructure must be in place if The Rivers is to attract other investors, whose projects will ensure the viability and sustainability of the community.

**But The City has to take the lead.**



## IV. THE PRECINCTS



Within the boundaries of the proposed Rivers revitalization district are now – or soon will be – some of the attractions and facilities that have literally put Calgary on the world’s map. But it also includes some of the most under-utilized and blighted land in the city.

Attractions like the Calgary Stampede, Fort Calgary, and the Calgary Zoo already draw millions of visitors – and dollars - into the area every year. And when the recently-announced master plans for all three organizations are implemented, and the Calgary Science Centre is relocated to a site just north of the Zoo parking lot, The Rivers district will have even more attractive, year ‘round destinations.

On the other hand, some areas of The Rivers are empty, unsafe pockets of urban blight. For example, East Village is immediately adjacent to the downtown business district, an easy walk to work, but few would be willing to walk – day or night - on its dangerous, drug- and crime-riddled streets.

The Beltline’s Victoria neighbourhood, on the east side of Macleod Trail, has begun the renewal process, particularly in the Warehouse District,

but needs to attract at least 10,000 more residents if it is to achieve its potential as a vibrant, high energy inner city community. And the Manchester Public Works Yard is now an aging, under-utilized supply and maintenance lot.

These ‘precincts’ certainly add weight as integral people-attracting components of the overall redevelopment of The Rivers. But they also present significant barriers to its success: the attractions are tax-exempt so contribute nothing to the area’s property tax base. Moreover, several contaminated sites will require environmental remediation before any new development can begin.

The unusual mix of uses in the area will not be for everyone, but at the same time, it will be exciting and stimulating.



## IV. THE PRECINCTS | East Village



Close to the heart of downtown is the East Village, a proposed new residential community adjacent to the central business district, bounded by Fort Calgary to the east, the Bow River to the north, and the CPR mainline to the south.

Although now a blighted, 'no man's land' with serious public safety issues and very few permanent residents, plans are for East Village to become a high-density urban village with significant links to cultural, recreational, retail, and commercial areas, as well as to the proposed downtown U of C campus. With an estimated 49.4 acres of developable land, East Village has the potential to become a distinct and prosperous community, home to as many as 10,000 new residents over the next 20 years.

A number of City-led infrastructure initiatives identified in the East Village Area Development Plan (ARP) will help draw investment into the area. These improvements are intended to reconnect East Village to the downtown and adjacent communities, including the Beltline and Stampede Park, and improving local access within East Village, much of which was compromised by the development of the south and northeast LRT lines. Pedestrian-oriented streets, community parks and amenities are planned that support East Village residential development objectives. (Source: East Village Area Redevelopment Plan, October, 2004, page 7)

Initiatives identified in the ARP include flood proofing, road raising and utility improvement, improved stormwater treatment, sanitary line relocation, district energy services, the development of a riverfront promenade, public squares and streetscape amenities.

## IV. THE PRECINCTS | The Calgary Stampede



The Calgary Exhibition & Stampede's long-range expansion plans call for the development of Stampede Park as a 24 / 7 / 365 multi-use community park with a variety of entertainment, educational, 'discovery' exhibition and agricultural facilities.

Stampede Park is already one of the busiest community gathering places within southern Alberta: the 2.6 million who visit Stampede Park throughout the year account for 16% of all visitor spending in Calgary. The Calgary Stampede "has become a cultural icon and an international brand that generates significant economic and social value". (Source: Calgary Exhibition & Stampede Expansion Plan, 2004, page 3)

The Stampede's expansion plan is ambitious. It calls for the Stampede to spend \$550 million over the next 20 years to enhance the expanded 193-acre Park as a "year round destination attraction for Calgarians and for business and leisure travelers from around the world... a unique urban park that benefits a broad community of stakeholders."

The revitalization of The Rivers district and projects identified in the Stampede's expansion plan are mutually supportive and complimentary.

For example, the Stampede is committed to reclaiming and transforming approximately 30 acres along the edge of the Elbow River into a riverbank park.

And The Rivers revitalization district will include a riverwalk along the west bank of the Elbow and the south bank of the Bow Rivers, which will create a strong pedestrian link to Stampede Park from

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the downtown core, East Village, old Inglewood, and the attractions of the Zoo, Fort Calgary and the new Science Centre.

The new 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass will also be a boon to the Stampede's plans. For pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, it will connect the Park with East Village and downtown via Olympic Way, and will be key to creating the seamless connection of East Village, Fort Calgary, the Beltline and Stampede Park.

The Stampede, University of Calgary and other arts and culture stakeholders are currently discussing the opportunity of sharing studio and theatre space in The Rivers, an opportunity that would be made more viable by the 4<sup>th</sup> Street connector.

Access to and from Stampede Park will be improved significantly – particularly before and after major events – by the 4<sup>th</sup> Street connector, coupled with improved pedestrian and bicycle routes along the Elbow River pathway, as well as the introduction of Intelligent Transportation Systems.



## IV. THE PRECINCTS | Manchester Public Works Yard



The Manchester Public Works Yard is now an 83-acre, 33-building conglomerate of operations, including vehicle storage and maintenance garages, and supply and material warehouses.

Many of the buildings are cramped, unsuitable work environments, 40 or 50 years old, and reaching the end of their life cycle. The City is currently investigating the possibility that the site itself may need environmental remediation before any redevelopment can begin.

The Manchester master plan recommends revitalizing the Yard, and moving it forward to become a regional depot and a more efficient, effective, safe and secure operations workplace centre. The improved Manchester yards would house the headquarters of operations such as Waterworks, Wastewater, Roads, and Fleet and Supply Management Services, including those administrative support functions that do not need to be downtown.

As the Manchester site is redeveloped, utility and infrastructure upgrades - of which roads and transportation is a major component - will be key considerations. Adjacent roads, such as 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue, may experience the pressure of the additional traffic, pressure that may be intensified by development of the East Village and Beltline areas. It may be necessary to accelerate planned road enhancements and major transportation construction projects, such as the proposed interchanges at Blackfoot Trail and Macleod Trail, to keep up with this growth.

The overall improvement of pedestrian and bicycle transportation throughout The Rivers district, as well as the introduction of Intelligent Transportation Systems, may also benefit access and improve traffic flow around the precinct.



## IV. THE PRECINCTS | Calgary Zoo

The Calgary Zoo, already a leader in Canada, has outlined a major expansion in its 2004 to 2008 master plan. This expansion, will create an Arctic Shores exhibit, upgrade existing facilities, and provide a new North Gate complex adjacent to the parking area.

Occupying the St. George's Islands on the south side of Memorial Drive, and with a large parking facility north of Memorial, the expansion of the Zoo is limited by restrictions resulting from the parking lot having been built on a former landfill site.

With appropriate remediation, the area north of Memorial Drive can become a significant natural land resource, as well as a superb setting enjoying excellent road and LRT access.

Furthermore, the adjacent Nose Creek corridor is a significant natural and archaeological resource that could become the site of civic attractions that complement and enhance the Zoo and new Science Centre.



## IV. THE PRECINCTS | Science Centre



Calgary's new best-of-class Science Centre will be a community centerpiece, where inspired, innovative and creative learning techniques are applied in a meaningful – and kid-intriguing – way. Exhibits, programs and activities will be hands-on, mind-on and sometimes even body-on experiences of discovery and exploration.

To be two and a half times larger than the existing Science Centre the new facility will be located on 15 acres of land north of the Calgary Zoo parking lot, and connected to the regional trail system and other Rivers district precincts and attractions.

Bringing the Zoo and Science Centre together will result in an appealing destination attraction 'zone' that will draw both visitors and local residents, and greatly enhance the overall lure and energy of the revitalized area.

Moreover, the vision of the new Science Centre extends beyond the new facility to include restoring Nose Creek to its former status as a meandering channel. This would involve rehabilitating the "oxbows," which, over time, were filled in with garbage. Integrating the new Science Centre with the restored creek and its environs would be a shining example of successful sustainable development in practice.

But the Science Centre faces development restrictions similar to those of the Calgary Zoo: it too will be built on a former landfill site and environmental remediation will be necessary before any building can occur.

## IV. THE PRECINCTS | Fort Calgary



Fort Calgary is the city's birthplace, a place where the Bow and Elbow rivers connect, and where history and a natural prairie park can be celebrated in the shadow of the downtown highrises.

Located on some of the most scenic land in the entire city, the confluence of the two rivers provides peaceful water-side viewpoints and picnic areas. It's easily accessed by public transportation – LRT and bus routes – as well as the river valley pathway system.

And as our only national, provincial and municipal historic site, Fort Calgary adds considerably to the vitality of our city.

Occupying 34.7 acres of prime riverfront property, Fort Calgary is an integral part of The Rivers revitalization district, and critical to the establishment of the river valley park system, the downtown open space plan, and the development of East Village.

Over the next several years, Fort Calgary plans to do \$5 million in essential improvements to the facilities and natural environment.

Two projects included in the Historic Park Development Plan are currently underway. One such project, to be incorporated into the Riverwalk, is an interpretive feature that tells Calgary's story, 'Where the

Rivers Meet'. The feature will include signage on sandstone boulders, benches and a plaza area where visitors can enjoy the view while learning the city's history.

Fort Calgary is also in the process of restoring the exterior of the Deane House across the Elbow River. A pedestrian bridge from the main Fort site on the west side of the Elbow to the Deane and Hunt houses would benefit the historic park and support pedestrian movement within The Rivers itself.

The northeast corner of Fort Calgary land is the proposed location of the stormwater wetlands required as part of the East Village redevelopment. Done well, this urban runoff treatment facility will be an environmentally attractive area, one that complements and enhances both Fort Calgary and the Riverwalk.

The layout and design of the wetlands, as well as the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E. connections between East Village and Fort Calgary, will be important considerations as revitalization of The Rivers progresses.

## IV. THE PRECINCTS | The Beltline's Victoria neighbourhood



One of Calgary's oldest neighbourhoods, the community of Victoria east of Macleod Trail, is now part of the Beltline area, which extends from the Elbow River to 14<sup>th</sup> Street and from the CPR tracks to 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Influenced significantly by its adjacency to both the CPR tracks and the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede, there is tremendous opportunity to redevelop this culturally diverse district into a unique and vibrant community, a 'people place' that is alive with energy and vitality.

Redevelopment of the area east of Macleod Trail began with the Warehouse District, where the historic red brick buildings have been restored, and are now home to many leading-edge creative businesses.

Just a few of the other projects currently in the works: the redevelopment of the historic Victoria School site for high density mixed-use residential, creating a mixed use 'rail town' adjacent to the CPR tracks, and redevelopment of the Stampede Station site on Macleod Trail to include condos, a hotel and casino.

These projects signal the much-needed increase in the number of people living in the community. In fact, the Victoria area of the Beltline has the

potential to accommodate 10,000 to 15,000 more residents, and an estimated \$1.5 billion of private sector development.

Infrastructure – roads and utilities – that support this intensification of the neighbourhood must be in place before these private sector projects can move forward.

While proximity to the CPR is part of what gives Victoria its unique character, it also draws a clear line separating the area from downtown. Connecting East Village and downtown on the north side of the tracks via the 4th Street connector will help mitigate this separation, and enable redevelopment of the Victoria district.

Such a connector also means Victoria can take advantage of downtown's growth by offering convenient, accessible and more affordable office, retail, entertainment and residential accommodation.

Determining the southeast LRT alignment across the Elbow River and into downtown is a decision the Beltline community, land owners and developers want sooner rather than later – even if the LRT is not built for many more years. Several options have been explored. One would



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follow the CPR mainline; others propose going through the community, options that cause concern in that they would carve up the neighbourhood.

Another obstacle to the area's development is the Victoria Park Transit Centre, an industrial facility which occupies 11 acres beside the Elbow River between 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> avenues S.E.

A significant number of stakeholders have identified the Transit Centre as an inappropriate use of the land, one that detracts from the possibility of future redevelopment of the area.

The 300 buses housed at the Transit Centre means there is considerable bus traffic to, from and through the neighbourhood, and there is an unsightly noise barrier bisecting 11th Avenue S.E.

Moreover, the Centre effectively bars the community from the waterfront; moving it will create a gateway by which residents can have quick and easy access to the rivers and pathways.



# V. THE RIVERS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Rivers will reclaim public spaces, create a vibrant public realm, connect people with places, and be a catalyst for private and public sector investment. It will demonstrate leadership in great urban design based on optimizing social, environmental, and economic benefits.



The redevelopment, renewal and revitalization of The Rivers district will create an unique, appealing and people-friendly urban environment, a vital, diverse mixed-use community where people can live, work and spend their leisure time safely, comfortably and respectfully.

The Rivers will offer residents an appealing choice of housing, transportation, recreation and employment options. It will honour, preserve and enhance the natural and built environments. And it will offer potential investors an appealing opportunity for participation.

The development strategy integrates the 'Triple Bottom Line' approach to urban planning, whereby the true value or cost of a particular project or activity is measured according to social and environmental - as well as financial - criteria.

# V.



## Creating a residential community that's safe, inclusive, and energized.

It's impossible to overstate the safety concerns facing The Rivers today: much of the area is a frightening 'no go zone', even in broad daylight. And at night, even such high daytime traffic locations as Fort Calgary, the Deane House and the Zoo parking lot, are taken over by criminals, druggies and drunks.

In fact, Calgary Police Service statistics reveal that the East Village and Victoria communities have a crimes-against-persons rate (assaults and street robberies) **three to six times higher** than other inner city communities such as Erlton or the west end of downtown.

But a redeveloped, revitalized Rivers community will be safe, vibrantly 'alive', and welcoming to all ages, income and interest groups. It will be an inviting 24 / 7 urban environment, one where 'street life' means cafes and

patios, green spaces and window shopping, without the drugs, prostitution and other anti-social behavior that is The Rivers' 'street life' today.

'Eyes' will be back on the street; people will want to be out and about in 'their' community. People will live in The Rivers, not simply drive through it, or stop in for an occasional visit to the Zoo or Fort Calgary. And people who live in a neighbourhood, take ownership for it.

The neighbourhoods will be attractive places to live and work, but there is a need to improve, replace, and add to the housing currently available. All housing will be within easy access of the riverfront green space, well-connected, and close to parks, major attractions, recreation facilities, public services, pathways and bike routes.



THE CITY OF  
**CALGARY**

## V. THE RIVERS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A broad mix of housing types and prices – including affordable housing – will be available. The area needs full time residents – as many as 20,000 could be accommodated in the next 15 years – to give it the energy, vibrancy and diversity it should have.

The provision of affordable housing is key to The City's vision for The Rivers, so important, in fact, that such housing should be viewed as an essential piece of the area's infrastructure. Residential accommodation for all ages and incomes will be needed, including students.

The Rivers development strategy calls for innovative approaches to planning and designing such housing projects. For example, affordable housing could be built on the parkade, and / or a residential component for mixed age and social groups – including the elderly and low income – could be added to cultural or recreation facilities.





# V.



## Protecting and enhancing the environment

A revitalized Rivers district will significantly improve this brownfield area - much of which has been damaged, eroded or contaminated - making it much more appealing and welcoming to the public while protecting it from future harm or misuse.

Many locations within The Rivers have potential contamination challenges, which will require the appropriate remediation prior to redevelopment.

For example, City properties in East Village were formerly sites of industrial operations, a hide processing facility, and underground storage tanks. The nature and extent of contamination are being assessed, and remediation measures will be taken that are appropriate for the planned future use of each site.

Not surprisingly, much of The Rivers district is a floodplain area. Protection from floods caused by unusual rainfall events or ice jams will be a key factor in redevelopment; in East Village, for example, the preferred solution would be raising ground elevations.

Treatment of urban stormwater runoff will also be required as East Village is redeveloped. The most desirable option is the development of a

stormwater wetland on the northeast corner of the Fort Calgary lands. These wetlands would be a showcase for sustainable development, while at the same time being an attractive educational interpretive feature for the public to enjoy.

Another sustainable development option will be the use of alternative energy sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A proposed re-generation facility within The Rivers district will provide reliable thermal energy in the form of hot water distributed to downtown government buildings.

This district energy system will also generate electricity, optimizing energy efficiency and enhancing Calgary's electricity supply. Future developments in East Village, including the proposed urban campus of the U of C, could tie into the system.

The reconstruction of the Bow River Weir, adjacent to the community of Inglewood, will restore, improve and naturalize the river shoreline, while at the same time preserving the irrigation function.



## V. THE RIVERS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



### Creating public spaces

In many ways, The Rivers is in an enviable position. It includes some of the most beautiful 'waterfront' property in the city, is on the edge of downtown, and is already the location of some of Calgary's favourite destinations, with more on the drawing boards.

But for too long, these natural advantages have been lost, far overshadowed by urban blight, crime, and decay on streets and back lanes throughout the area.

Public enjoyment of the waterfront has been limited by generally unwelcoming, unsafe and unappealing pathways and access points. Easy access to downtown is wasted if nobody wants to live in the area. And public attractions, such as Fort Calgary and the Zoo, are virtual ghost lands after dark.

The Rivers can become an attractive, safe and welcoming public realm within a high density urban environment, one that includes new parks,

a riverwalk, pedestrians and bicycle pathways, and open spaces that ensure access to the Bow and Elbow rivers and Nose Creek.

The Riverwalk will become a year-round destination in itself, as well as a pedestrian connector within The Rivers and nearby neighbourhoods. It will offer a variety of experiences, from nature walks to wildlife watching, and from picnicking to riverfront patios and restaurants.

St. Patrick's Island, now unsafe and under-utilized, will become a true public park – clean, safe and inviting, one that will be as attractive to families, picnickers and nature-lovers as Prince's Island Park is now. As East Village and the nearby new community of The Bridges are developed, St. Patrick's Island will become an important – and welcoming – refuge from urban life.

Further green space will be reclaimed – and the Riverwalk enhanced – when the 7<sup>th</sup> Street underpass is closed, and the new 4<sup>th</sup> Street connector is opened to handle traffic to, from, and through the area.

# V.



## Connecting people with places

Whether by foot, bicycle, private vehicle, or public transit, the efficient movement of people in, out, within, and through the area is key to the successful revitalization of The Rivers.

Public transportation will be the primary mode of travel to connect the district's residents and visitors with work, recreation and shopping, and a comprehensive pathway system will connect pedestrians and cyclists with all sectors of the community.

But removing – or crossing – any barriers to unimpeded movement, such as the CP rail line and the two rivers themselves – has been identified as a precursor to any new housing projects and / or such major developments.

Stakeholders point to the building of the 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass as the single most important step leading to the revitalization of the area, and a major catalyst for attracting other investment. In fact, the University of Calgary sees this connector as key to creating an urban campus which

links the University with its partners, such as the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede, arts groups and community organizations.

The Rivers development strategy highlights providing, enhancing and encouraging the use of alternative transportation methods - particularly public transit, biking and walking – in a pedestrian-friendly environment that reduces reliance on private cars to connect residential, cultural and workplaces.

Other initiatives focus on building, upgrading, maintaining and managing the roadway infrastructure the revitalized community will need as it develops.



# VI. THE RIVERS PRIORITY PROJECTS

## Time horizon: up to six years

If The Rivers is to be redeveloped and 're-energized' according to the stated vision, mission and objectives laid down in the revitalization strategy, key infrastructure initiatives must first be completed / those projects stakeholders have identified as most likely to stimulate private sector development.

As the 'kick start' initiatives are put in place, it is expected that a number of other major development projects will get underway, in particular, the University of Calgary's Urban Campus, the Stampede Park expansion, and the private development of high density residential projects in both the East Village and the Beltline.

Of course there are limits to the amount of funding that will be available initially, limits which will impact the scope and timing of the public infrastructure project in the early phases, and in those phases to follow (see section VII and appendices).

These costs will be further refined as more detailed planning and design work is completed.





- 1. East Village Infrastructure**
- 2. Riverwalk**
- 3. 4th Street Connector**

## VI. THE RIVERS PRIORITY PROJECTS

### Priority:

## East Village Infrastructure

### What it involves:

Upgrading the infrastructure in East Village must happen before any private investment is likely to be attracted to the area.

This means building and upgrading the roads in the district; relocating and upgrading utilities; extensive floodproofing; relocating the LRT spurline; preparing district energy piping; constructing a stormwater retention wetland; developing local parks and the riverfront promenade; and creating the Riverfront Avenue connection.

The estimated cost of these infrastructure improvements do not include land acquisition to support road reconfigurations and LRT alignments, or the costs of assembling the land to create developable parcels which would be readily marketable. Nor does it include surveying, subdivision and legal costs associated with City lands.

Also still an unknown is the potential cost of site remediation to address any environmental contamination of City-owned properties in the East Village.

A full environmental assessment - Phase 3 - is now underway, upon which remediation costs can be estimated. Soil clean-up will be one of the first steps before any redevelopment can happen. The intended use for a particular property will dictate the type of remediation that will be required.

# VI.



## Specific infrastructure project requirements:

- Completing the East Village City-owned land strategy, including Phase 3 environmental assessments and cost estimates; survey and planning work (subdivisions, road closures); negotiation of interim utility easements, and land acquisition as required; and development of a disposition plan for City-owned properties
- Developing a stormwater wetland on the northwest corner of Fort Calgary, an environmentally-friendly storm-water retention pond that will provide a natural habitat for a variety of waterfowl and will be an interpretive / educational feature close to the Riverwalk and Fort Calgary
- Relocating of utilities within East Village to accommodate development plans
- Upgrading roads and utilities to support the planned increase in residential densities. Elevating roads above the floodplain would be the most practical way of floodproofing the area
- Relocating the LRT spur line to accommodate the development of Market Street, and small-scale mixed-use development
- Connecting the existing Riverfront Avenue east of the LRT Bridge to Riverfront Avenue in East Village
- Constructing two new parks: Central Square, a landscaped public area between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> avenues and 4<sup>th</sup> and Market streets, and Market Square, a smaller park of similar design proposed for the area between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> avenues on 5<sup>th</sup> Street S.E.
- Developing a district energy plant to produce hot water for a district heating system in East Village, as for municipal and federal buildings in downtown Calgary. The plant will also add to Calgary's electrical supply. Project costs will cover the distribution piping system in East Village only
- Upgrading of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E., between 1st Street S.E. and the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge over Elbow River, linking with the new 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass



## VI. THE RIVERS PRIORITY PROJECTS

### Priority: The Riverwalk

#### What it involves:

It's still just a concept, but, like similar 'people magnet' attractions such as San Antonio's Riverwalk or the Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park, the Riverwalk could become the jewel in the entire inner city revitalization crown.

The proposed waterfront promenade would extend from the Bow River through the East Village to Fort Calgary, then link up with a similar river pathway being planned for the expanded Stampede Park.

Of course the Riverwalk would include appropriate lighting and pathway furniture, selected both for public safety and visual appeal. Consideration should be given to incorporating public art and some complimentary small-scale commercial activities, such as restaurants, kiosks, etc.

Already The Rivers district includes some of the most beautiful waterfront property in the city. For too long, public enjoyment of this waterfront has been limited by the generally unwelcoming and unsafe access points. Redevelopment of the area as an attractive, safe and inviting public realm within a high density urban environment must include new parks and pathways that ensure access to the rivers.

The Riverwalk would be a destination in itself, as well as a pedestrian connector within The Rivers and adjacent neighbourhoods.



# VI.



## Specific project requirements:

- Developing the Bow River pathway through East Village, including a public plaza between the LRT Bridge and Fort Calgary as envisioned in the East Village ARP.
- Extending the Riverwalk along the south bank of the Bow, and south along the west bank of the Elbow, to link up with the proposed Stampede Park Riverwalk
- Closing the 7th Street underpass upon completion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass creating more green space along the Elbow River
- Exploring the possibility of allowing small commercial activities (restaurants, art kiosks, etc.) at strategic locations along the pathway (underpasses, river crossings, etc.)
- Incorporating public art and the wetlands interpretive feature as part of the Riverwalk design



## VI. THE RIVERS PRIORITY PROJECTS



### Priority:

## 4<sup>th</sup> Street Connector

### What it involves:

If local businesses and the proposed downtown campus of the U of C are to move into The Rivers area, a new underpass must be built to connect 4<sup>th</sup> Street SE both south and north of the CPR tracks.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Street connector will be well-lit, well-landscaped, and pedestrian-friendly. It will provide both pedestrian and vehicle connections between the East Village, Beltline and Stampede Park. The project will require land acquisition and relocation of the CPR storage tracks.

### Specific project requirements:

- Completing the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Underpass Functional Study including identification of geometric improvements, bridge location, new intersections, modifications to existing intersections, right-of-way and land requirements, potential environmental impacts, changes and impact on traffic patterns within the localized roadway network, and an estimated cost to construct
- Undertaking negotiations with CPR to relocate rail storage tracks along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Undertaking detailed design, tender and construction
- Exploring the potential for incorporating public art to create visual interest for pedestrians

# VII. OTHER PROJECTS



## 1. Affordable housing

The Rivers must be a place that attracts, welcomes and accommodates Calgarians of all ages and circumstances.

Therefore, the provision of affordable housing is a key strategy that will ensure the revitalized area is a robust, diverse and varied urban environment. Approximately 500 units of affordable housing - accommodation suitable for students, singles, families and seniors - will be developed in the East Village and Beltline areas, either directly by the City or in partnership with private sector developers and non-profit organizations.

Further discussion and investigation is needed to determine the most suitable options for the development of affordable housing in The Rivers.

Possible options include:

- Integrating affordable housing in private sector developments
- Building affordable housing to suit the needs of groups as diverse as students and seniors
- Building affordable housing over other projects, such as a parkade, educational or cultural facilities
- Redevelopment of The City's Trade Centre site to include affordable housing, as well as offices



## VII. OTHER PROJECTS

### 2. Victoria Park Transit Centre

The Victoria Park Transit Centre effectively shuts off the Beltline from the Elbow River, and blocks public access to, and enjoyment of, some of the most scenic waterfront property in all of Calgary.

The Transit Centre, which occupies 11 prime acres beside the Elbow between 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> avenues S.E., is presently the 'home base' of some 300 buses, which shuttle in and out – and through – the neighbourhood every day.

The site would be a prime location for mixed-use development, including residential, commercial, and both active and passive recreational pursuits.

Further investigation will be needed to find a suitable alternate location for Transit Centre operations. But in the meantime, Calgary Transit is prepared to make some changes that would better integrate the property with the redevelopment that will begin to happen in the area. These changes include bus access and egress, landscaping improvements, and removal of the so-called 'Berlin Wall'.

### 3. Environmental remediation

Site clean-up and other potential remediation measures will be needed in various locations, including:

- New Science Centre site
- Zoo parking lot
- Manchester Public Works Yards
- Victoria Park Transit Centre





# VII.



## 4. Pedestrian bridges

A series of pedestrian bridges will do much to link the residential, recreational and retail areas of The Rivers, as well as encouraging people to explore the area on foot, to get out of their cars... and walk.

Pedestrians window-shopping, strolling, pathway wandering, or even 'walking' errands, will be the 'eyes on the street' that will ensure The Rivers is safe, vibrant and full of energy.

The recommended pedestrian bridges across the Bow and Elbow rivers should connect:

- Inglewood to the east side of the Zoo, adjacent to the CPR bridge
- St. Patrick's Island to Memorial Drive to the Bridgeland LRT pedestrian connector
- Fort Calgary to the Deane House and Inglewood

## 5. Pedestrian and bicycle network

To support the vision of a revitalized community that embraces alternate transportation choices, a convenient, attractive network of paths and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will be needed throughout The Rivers district.

This network would include an allowance for boulevard pathways and cycle routes; connecting LRT stations to pathways, particularly between Erlton Station and the Manchester Yards; park 'n' bike and bike storage facilities; and sidewalk improvements, wheelchair ramps and curb cuts.

## 6. Transportation Management Systems

Infrastructure improvements and technology will be key to addressing traffic issues in the area, particularly those caused by special events at the Saddledome or Stampede Park and other peak periods, and under emergency conditions, such as an accident or heavy storm.

## 7. Weir replacement

Financial commitments are already in place for the construction of a safe, natural-looking river rapid that will restore the natural environment, eliminate the existing extreme drowning hazard, while preserving the weir's irrigation function. The additional allowance will enable further enhancements, such as educational and recreational features.

## 8. St. Patrick's Island

Improvements to pathways, lighting and picnic areas will make this area – currently unsafe and under-utilized – into a welcoming urban refuge.



# VIII. THE RIVERS DISTRICT FINANCING STRATEGY

“As local governments seek means to revitalize their communities in value-added ways, they are evaluating what needs to be restored and rehabilitated. Old waterfronts, former manufacturing and commercial lands, run-down main streets, underused warehousing districts and heritage structures: all are up for scrutiny. The goal is to renew the built environment to capture the economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits that will drive their growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

From the Government of Ontario website  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Municipal Financial Tools for Planning and Development Series

Because Calgary’s infrastructure needs continue to outpace The City’s capital budget capacity, innovative financing sources must be found to help underwrite the costs of The Rivers revitalization.

Private sector investment will be attracted to The Rivers only if there is clear direction and commitment from The City of Calgary to first provide the necessary infrastructure. Thus, a well-defined multi-year financing strategy to enable The City to pay for this infrastructure will be key to the successful revitalization of the entire Rivers district.

The following sources, cornerstones of the proposed revitalization project, are required to pay for priority infrastructure projects through equity financing and self-supported debt:

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**
- **Federal and Provincial Support**
- **Development levies**
- **Strategic use of City-owned land**

# VIII.



## TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

“The secret to Chicago’s amazing recovery under (Mayor Richard) Daley has plenty to do with his bullish use of (tax increment financing), an obscure municipal finance tool – one that all Canadian mayors, as well as provincial policy-makers, would do well to consider...”

From The Globe & Mail.com  
Saturday, December 20, 2003  
John Lorinc, Municipal Affairs Columnist, Toronto Life

Tax increment financing is a tool that enables municipalities to borrow funds to finance public improvements within a clearly designated and defined area of ‘blight’, then repay these funds from the increased property taxes spurred by private investment.

Although definitions of “blight” vary somewhat from one municipality to another, some characteristics are common to all. For example, property taxes are stagnant or even shrinking. Private investment is not attracted to the area; the infrastructure is crumbling; families, businesses and

services are moving out; housing structures are decaying; and the streets are unattractive or worse, unsafe.

But renewal won’t happen without the public sector first taking the lead. Private interest and investment will come, but only if first stimulated by public investment, most often in infrastructure.

The TIF project is geared towards stimulating further investment: it is the initial catalyst that spreads to larger, more substantial players in the equation, such as large private companies or public institutions, who will then become the champions of revitalization until the TIF has finished.

The municipality’s funds are used to pay for specific upfront improvements that will spark private investment in the area, investment that brings with it new jobs, commercial activity, and an influx of residents, and is key to the long-term viability and sustainability of the revitalized area.



## VIII. THE RIVERS DISTRICT FINANCING STRATEGY

TIF has been successfully used in other jurisdictions to redevelop central business districts, finance affordable housing and redevelop brownfield sites with significant environmental problems.

from: Tax Increment Financing and Economic Development, Uses Structures, and Impacts, edited by Craig Johnson and Joyce Y. Man

**These are the same types of barriers and constraints that are present in the proposed Rivers revitalization zone.**

### TIF: The required steps

- Designate a geographic area, and put an 'imaginary fence' around it: this is a TIF district
- Determine the base tax revenue The City is presently receiving from this district
- Prepare both a detailed project plan and a financing plan, including detailed project costing, an economic feasibility study, a definition of the duration of the TIF district, and the expected date the debt will be retired
- Borrow the funds to pay for these planned – and necessary – improvements
- Attract private development and investment in the newly-improved area
- Property values within the TIF area increase, as do the property taxes, as a result of this new private sector investment
- Calculate the base and incremental tax revenue annually, and transfer the incremental revenues to a special account
- Repay the debt with the incremental tax revenue (over and above the pre-determined base level)
- Terminate the TIF district once the debt is repaid



# VIII.



## How TIF could work within The City of Calgary

Municipal tax revenue currently generated within The Rivers district represents a very small portion – about one half of one percent, (½ of 1%) - of The City's overall property tax base, about \$2.67 million per year.

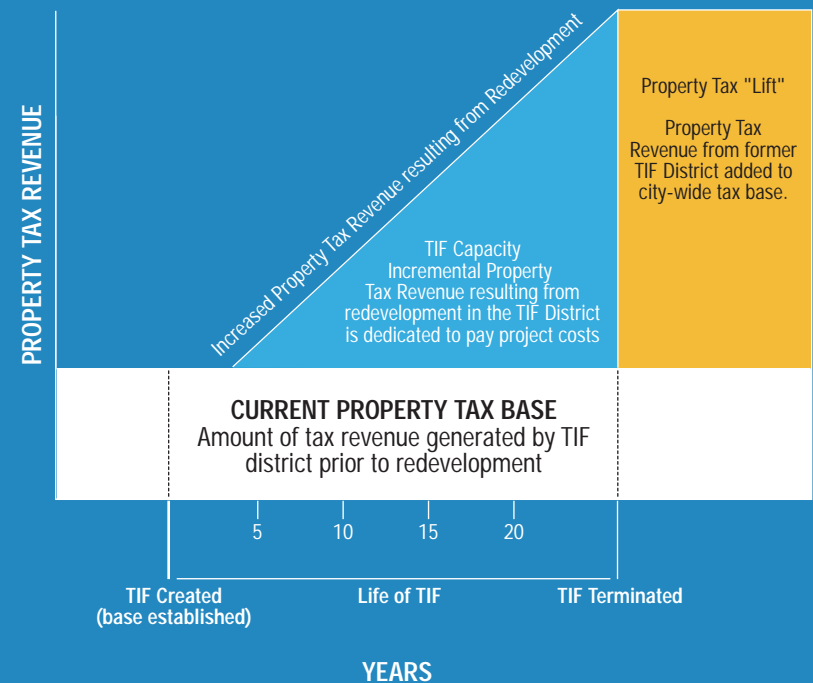
Preliminary discussions with developers indicate that The Rivers district could generate significant private sector investment over the next 10 to 15 years, if the needed up-front public infrastructure investments are made.

Once the required due diligence was completed, the TIF district would be designated through a bylaw approved by City Council, along with the approvals required to borrow funds to be used for specific upfront infrastructure improvements.

Each year, as part of the budget process, The City would calculate its municipal portion of the property tax revenue in the same manner as is done at present. For the designated TIF district, both the base and incremental revenue would be calculated. The district's tax revenue, with adjustments for Council's approved tax changes, would continue to go to general revenue. Any funds generated beyond the established base would be transferred to a special account and used to finance the redevelopment effort.

With the completion of the project and the final discharge of debt obligations, all municipal property taxes collected from The Rivers revitalization district – both base and incremental revenues – would be incorporated with The City's general revenue.

## How does Tax Increment Financing (TIF) work?



## VIII. THE RIVERS DISTRICT FINANCING STRATEGY

### PROVINCIAL EDUCATION TAX

Calgary's property tax revenues are divided between The City and the Province. The Province sets the level of the education allocation, then Council passes an annual property tax bylaw to generate the funds required for both education and municipal purposes.

Because funds available for education are derived from the property tax base, increments to this base from new private sector investment within the TIF district would produce corresponding incremental revenues for education as well.

The Province should examine the feasibility of forgoing the tax increment within The Rivers district, allowing The City to apply all property tax incremental revenues to funding capital infrastructure.

### FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL SUPPORT

Large-scale urban renewal projects require significant funding. While The City can provide leadership and seed funding in this effort, we cannot alone assume the full cost or associated risk of redevelopment financing in the scale envisioned.

The partnership, investment and commitment of all orders of government - federal, provincial and municipal - will be needed to make it attractive to private sector investors.

### DEVELOPMENT LEVIES

To deliver on The City's responsibility for managing and coordinating the planning and investment to accommodate growth and renewal, it is proposed that The City front-end the cost of the infrastructure and public amenities required to kick start private sector development in The Rivers revitalization area.

Land owners will be one of the key benefactors of this infrastructure so it would be appropriate to recover some of these costs through levies collected at the development permit stage.

# VIII.



The City of Calgary will establish policies and standards for development levies for infrastructure and services in redevelopment areas. Part of the challenge in doing so will be understanding and responding to the dynamics of community redevelopment and revitalization in ways that support their fiscal, social and environmental needs.

It will be to everyone's advantage to work together to negotiate equitable cost sharing agreements for inner city and downtown redevelopments projects, including The Rivers. Established development levies are a sustainable, long-term funding source for The City and the established communities. And on the other hand, they would provide cost clarity and predictability to the development industry.

## STRATEGIC USE OF CITY-OWNED LAND

The City has strategic land holdings in The Rivers district, assets that could be sold or leased to provide financing for the district.

Such use of these lands, and / or the redirection of the sale or lease proceeds, will require special consideration by Council.

## CONCLUSION

Without City leadership, it is likely that much of area within The Rivers district will slide even deeper into decline and decay. It would become a growing tax burden on Calgary taxpayers, and a dangerous eyesore to us all.

But a comprehensive financing strategy, which includes conventional and innovative revenue sources, could kick start development of the area.

The participation of both the federal and provincial governments will be needed. Contributions from the developers through clearly defined and fair development levies will be required. And, as a major landholder in the district, The City should consider the strategic use of these holdings to help cover the costs of up-front investment.

In combination with these more traditional sources of capital, Tax Increment Financing shows promise as a tool to stimulate urban redevelopment through a multi-year capital improvement program.

# IX. THE IMPLEMENTATION

## 1. The challenge

Revitalizing Calgary's Rivers district will be a complex blending of capital projects, financial initiatives, and public participation, with a diverse group of public and private stakeholders involved.

The revitalization program must satisfy a very high level of expectations from community, public and private sector investors / stakeholders.

These stakeholders, along with civic partners, will expect a planning and approval process that enables large and complex projects to proceed expeditiously.

Adjacent communities will expect their concerns about the impact on their own neighborhoods - such as traffic and social issues - to be addressed. They will also expect to have meaningful input into the revitalization strategy.

As funding is anticipated from all three levels of government, each will have its own expectations regarding input into infrastructure planning and

development decisions. A high degree of accountability will be expected by the public, as well as by all levels of government.

Successful implementation of the revitalization strategy will require a clear management structure, one that is able to balance sometimes conflicting objectives; manage complex projects within time and budget parameters; be consultative with, and responsive to, diverse stakeholders; and be fully accountable for the overall management of the program, including processes, decisions and outcomes.

The revitalization of The Rivers is not a single project. Rather, it is a collection of projects that will be implemented over an extended period of time by a range of investors with a range of 'agendas'.



# IX.



## 2. Management criteria

The management structure must be capable of organizing the financing of a range of interdependent infrastructure projects, then managing the projects themselves, all within stringent budget and scheduling limits. It must also be able to co-ordinate with building projects being undertaken by private developers and civic partners.

Experience has shown that, without an organizational structure that operates on sound business principles, with the authority and accountability for obtaining financing, managing and negotiating agreements, the revitalization of blighted urban areas is not likely to be successful.

To successfully implement a strategy as complex as the proposed revitalization of The Rivers, the management structure must meet the following criteria:

- It must be established specifically to manage the redevelopment, within a prescribed time period
- Adequate financial and management resources
- A management structure that is efficient and action-orientated
- Accountable to the principal financial contributors
- Authority to negotiate with the stakeholders and enter into contracts
- A simplified planning and approval process
- Includes members with development experience
- Direct access to government decision makers
- Open and accountable to all stakeholders



# IX. THE IMPLEMENTATION



## 3. Management options

### Option A: Internal existing “As Is” management structure

This has been the traditional public agency approach to managing projects - such as buildings and transportation infrastructure - within specified scope, quality, time and budget parameters.

Multiple departments within The City would be responsible for planning and implementing a number of distinct capital projects within the overall Rivers program. Each project would have its own administration and management structure, and approvals would occur through various Council standing policy committee processes.

#### The advantages:

- The existing organizational structure is already in place so a relatively short lead time is required
- The departments may have proven track records and are known to all stakeholders
- Good understanding of internal review and approval processes

#### The disadvantages:

- Multiple funding sources mean multiple departments involved; may become unwieldy and virtually unmanageable
- No single department has the authority for the overall development and program management responsibility
- Lack of dedicated resources may compromise the scope, schedule, and quality of projects, overtaxing available resources
- Multiple lines of responsibility may result in an ad hoc and incomplete analysis required for decision-making
- Multiple layers of approval may impede decision-making
- Lack of coordination in negotiating with stakeholders for contractual agreements
- Project risks related to cost and schedule are not coordinated
- Funding may be limited as it usually comes from annual operating and capital budgets
- Management expertise may not be readily available within The City

# IX.



## Option B: Internal 'single point' management structure

This option has been used by several public organizations to deliver complex multi-scope capital development programs, for example, The City of Calgary's Transportation Project Office, The Bridges, and The City of Edmonton's River Valley Development and the Streetscape Improvement programs.

These entities may include a blend of owner and contractor staff depending on resource requirements; however the owner retains all responsibility for ensuring compliance with time, budget and project quality requirements.

Instead of having multiple departments within The City each responsible for a component of the program, The City would create a single group, similar to a division or business unit, to be responsible for the entire Rivers program. Reporting to a director or general manager, this new group would follow the same processes for business planning and budgeting as other City groups.

## The advantages:

- One department has the authority for the overall development and program management responsibility
- Creates the opportunity to establish a 'best practice' approach to program/project management
- Ensures adequate resources to meet significant demands
- Contracted resources can be added or deleted quickly to meet fluctuating demands
- Can result in long-term transfer of skills to The City
- Ensures a coordinated approach in negotiating with stakeholders for contractual agreements
- Project risks related to cost and schedule are centrally managed/controlled
- Specific funding will be made available to the program
- One direct and consistent line of accountability/responsibility to the approval authorities, community and other stakeholders

## The disadvantages:

- Limited opportunity to streamline the existing approval processes
- Management expertise may not be readily available within The City
- Multiple layers of approval may impede decision-making



## IX. THE IMPLEMENTATION



### Option C: External 'contractor' management structure

This option has been used by public organizations to deliver complex capital development projects while transferring as much risk as possible; for example, the University of Alberta's Project Management Office and The Government of Canada's outsourcing initiatives.

These entities may include a blend of owner and contractor staff; however, the contracted entity assumes all responsibility for ensuring compliance with time, budget and project quality requirements.

Typically, the contractor would be responsible to The City for planning and implementing capital projects and may be involved in finding financing for capital projects. The management contractor would also be responsible for obtaining project approvals, public consultation and selecting consultants, and is often responsible for negotiating contracts on behalf of The City (although the contract usually remains between The City and the second contractor.)

### The advantages:

- Ensures 'best practice' approach to program/project management
- Ensures adequate resources are available to meet significantly higher demands
- Contracted resources can be added or deleted quickly to meet fluctuating demands
- Can result in long term transfer of skills to owner
- Can be financed as part of project overhead costs

### The disadvantages:

- Contractual responsibility – and therefore, ultimately, the risks - remains with The City
- Do not have ability to enter into contractual arrangements, negotiate leases and obtain financing
- Limited opportunity to streamline approval processes
- Day-to-day control does not rest with The City
- Lack of flexibility after initial scope is defined
- Perception that the public interest will be transferred to private control



# IX.



## Option D: Special Purpose Corporation (SPC) management structure

This involves the formation of a new corporate legal entity, created to enter into contracts, negotiate agreements, hire staff and borrow funds, all necessary to implement the development strategy.

Well-known examples of Canadian SPCs are the Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA), The Toronto Waterfront Corporation, The Forks North Portage Partnership and The Vancouver Convention Centre.

A Special Purpose Corporation (SPC) may be a blend of public and possibly private stakeholders. It operates at arms length from all levels of government but is governed by a board with representatives of such partners.

Typically, the SPC has a chief executive officer, appointed by the board, who is responsible for managing the corporation, and ensuring the mandate of the board is implemented within the allocated budget and time schedule.

## The advantages:

- Best resources with real estate, development and project management experience can be brought together
- A simplified project planning and approval process
- Open and accountable to public stakeholders
- All investor stakeholders can be represented through board structure
- Operating at arms length from The City minimizes bureaucracy
- Project risks transferred from The City to limited company
- Can enter into contracts, negotiate leases and obtain financing
- Operating budget part of capital development program

## The disadvantages:

- Public agencies are not generally familiar with this approach
- Higher overhead costs because of increased responsibilities
- Property management responsibilities, if desired, are limited to duration of capital development program
- Day-to-day control does not rest with The City
- Lack of flexibility after initial scope is defined
- Perception that the public interest will not be within municipal control



# X. NEXT STEPS



To move ahead with the revitalization of Calgary's Rivers district, a number of steps must be taken, and deliverables met, over the next 12 months.

Some of these tasks will focus on the detailed development and overall management of the revitalization program, and others on moving forward with the priority projects.

## 1. Program development, management and administration tasks, to include:

- Developing a proposal for the ongoing organizational structure and budget that will be needed to fully implement the revitalization strategy
- Undertaking a detailed review of TIF best practices and engaging a TIF advisor
- Developing a detailed business case for the revitalization effort, and the use of tax increment financing (TIF) as a funding tool. The business case will include detailed costing and a financial analysis / development pro forma to ensure a targeted return on public sector investment
- Enacting the appropriate enabling statutes, including a TIF District bylaw, a borrowing bylaw, and any articles of incorporation that may be required
- Developing and initiating a marketing and communications plan, one that fulfills the information requirements and priorities of all stakeholder groups

# X.



## 2. Priority infrastructure tasks, to include:

- Completing the East Village City-owned land strategy, including the phase three environmental remediation report; survey and planning work (subdivision, road closures); interim easements negotiations and acquisitions as required; and a disposition strategy for City-owned land
- Completing the functional study for the 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass
- Confirming S.E. LRT alignment
- Negotiating the relocation of the CPR storage tracks along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue to accommodate the new 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass
- Selecting any necessary consultants, and initiating detailed planning, design and costing work for the priority projects (East Village infrastructure, the Riverwalk, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Street underpass)

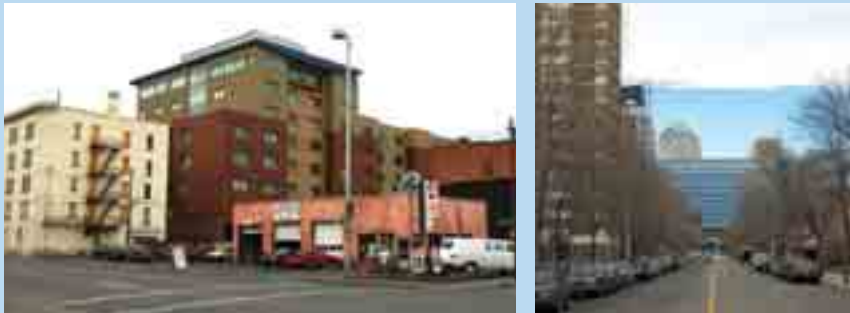


# XI. CARPE DIEM



**The time is right to advance and implement a coordinated multi-pronged, multi-partner strategy to reclaim, revitalize and re-energize Calgary's Rivers district.**

The area can once again be a thriving, vibrant and diverse community, a community that includes unique residential, cultural, recreational, educational, destination attractions, and commercial places; and a



community that protects and enhances Calgary's natural and built environments and heritage.

The Rivers district was once the heart of this city, but it's fallen on hard times. Over the past few decades, the area has slipped further and further down from what it once was. It's become an empty, unsafe wasteland, a patchwork of contaminated sites, industrial operations, and crime-soaked streets, all within walking distance of downtown Calgary, one of the most vibrant business districts in the country.

But if The Rivers is to be revitalized, The City must take the lead, must 'kick start' the redevelopment by solving the infrastructure, access and environmental issues that are now barriers to other public and private sector investment.

The proposed revitalization strategy recognizes the importance of timing, and of taking advantage of what's already planned for the area. The strategy calls for linking the master plans recently put forward by other groups and organizations to produce a 'whole' that is even more than the sum of its parts, to create synergies that benefit all stakeholders. . . and all Calgarians.



# XI.



## Triple Bottom Line assessment

The revitalization of The Rivers meets the Triple Bottom Line measurement criteria.

**Social:** It will create distinct character districts that are safe, vibrant and accessible to all Calgarians. The city's heritage will be respected and preserved.

**Environmental:** Existing brownfield sites will be cleaned up and restored to a condition that permits development; the riverbanks will be reclaimed and accessible; sizable natural areas within the river valley system will be protected and preserved; and the principles of sustainability will be a basis for all redevelopment.

**Economic:** The City's leadership in developing the necessary infrastructure will leverage additional private and public sector investment, which, in turn, will result in a vibrant, thriving district that will be attractive to tourism and other economic activity.

The revitalization strategy will create an inner city district that is truly the heart of downtown Calgary, as it was half a century ago. But the time to implement the strategy is now, when other master plans are aligned and ready.

**If this opportunity is lost, The Rivers will slide ever deeper into decay, and will be "on life support" for decades to come.**





THE CITY OF  
**CALGARY**

