



# Design Brief: The Future of Stephen Avenue

FRESH IDEAS FOR CALGARY'S MOST ICONIC STREET

MARCH, 2019 V1.0

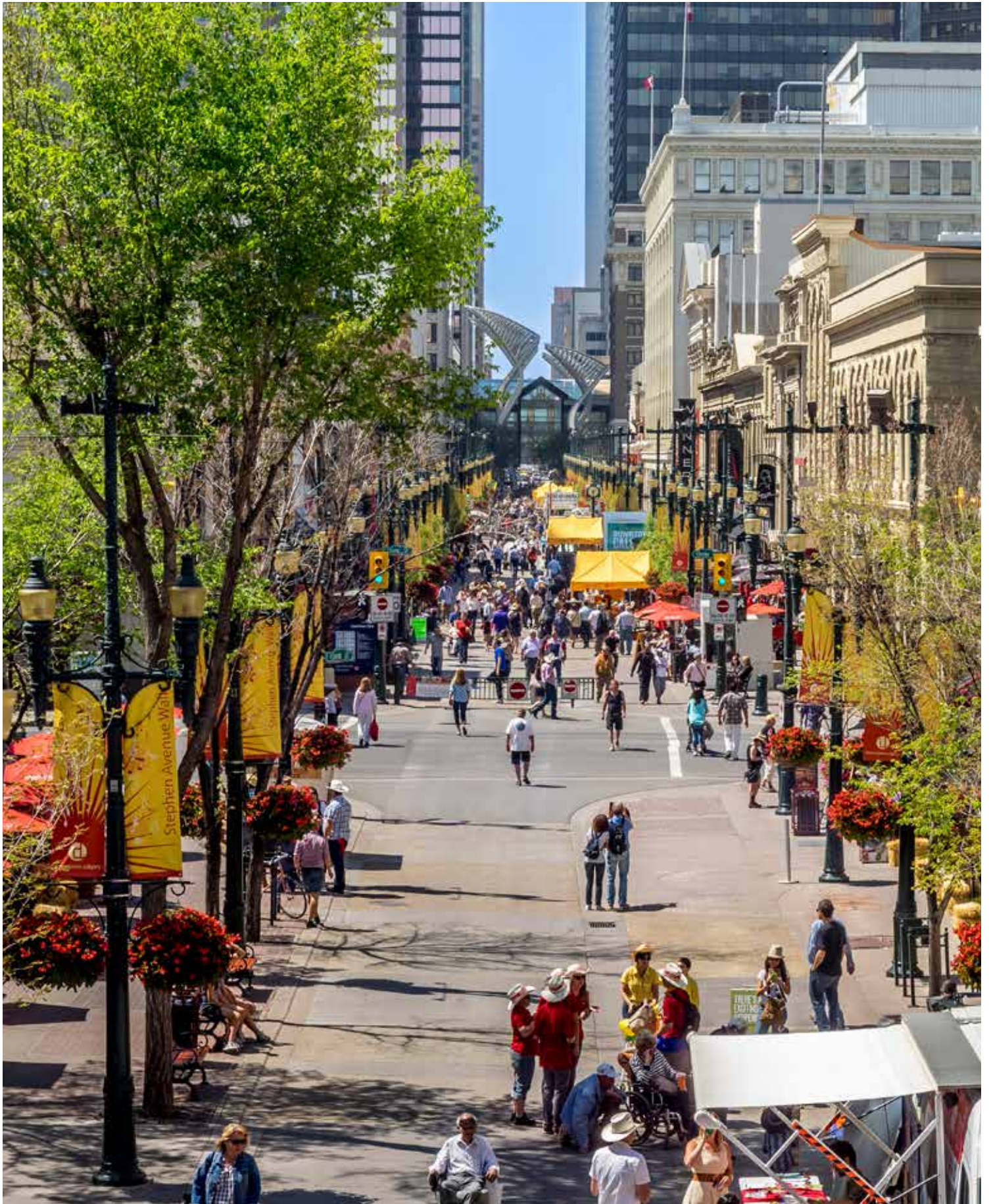


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# 1. Calgary's Urban Experiment

Since the establishment of the Canadian Pacific Railway Station in the early 1900's on 9 Avenue SW, Stephen Avenue (8 Avenue SW) has been a focal point for commerce, retail, finance, culture, and corporate head offices in Calgary. Today, the avenue's built form reflects its urban evolution, and hosts a mix of historic buildings, cultural landmarks, convention centres, skyscrapers, museums, parks, and multi-use shopping destinations.

Over the past 100+ years, Stephen Avenue has undergone numerous transformations. From wooden sidewalks, to vehicular corridor, to streetcar route, to pedestrian mall; Stephen Avenue is, and always has been, a reflection of our city's economy, culture, and ideals. In the 1960s, the concept of a pedestrian-oriented mall along Stephen Avenue emerged, forging its place as one of our city's most ambitious urban experiments. The concept of a car-free pedestrian mall, coupled with an extensive elevated pedestrian network through downtown (known today as the +15 network), was lauded as a solution to an increasingly vehicular-dominated city and a languishing downtown economy.

Despite initial optimism, the first iteration of the mall was faced with largely negative public sentiment arising from ongoing social issues, challenges to mall merchants, and concerns over night-time safety. This, coupled with growing concern over the ongoing demolition of heritage resources to make room for new development, led to a second iteration of the pedestrian mall undergoing construction in the 1990s.

The '90s revitalization of the mall was largely successful, and the area emerged as one of the premiere destinations for dining, shopping and entertainment. New developments integrated heritage resources into the design, and vehicles were allowed on the avenue during evenings to provide "eyes on the street" and to enhance perceptions of public safety.

## 1.1 Why it's time to rethink Stephen Avenue

Since the '90s revitalization, Stephen Avenue has undergone minor improvements at strategic locations, largely adjacent to new developments. However, the majority of the pedestrian mall has reached the end of its usable life. As a result, the physical appearance of the avenue is deteriorating, making the area less attractive to the public.

The physical deterioration, coupled with Calgary's recent economic downturn has impacted the vibrancy and activity along Stephen Avenue. Prior to the downturn, local businesses thrived in spite of a lack of activity on evenings and weekends. Today, those quiet periods are making it exceedingly difficult for local businesses to succeed, and private investment in the area has languished.

In response to these economic setbacks, efforts are underway to survive the downturn and thrive in the long-term. Calgarians have resolved to adapt, diversify, and overcome these economic hardships. This period of economic transition means now is the opportune time to plan a path forward, refresh our thinking, and envision a new future of possibilities for Stephen Avenue.

Beyond the pedestrian mall, there is a renewed interest in defining a vision for the avenue west of 3 Street SW. The establishment of Contemporary Calgary at 11 St SW in the former Centennial Planetarium / Telus World of Science will provide a major draw to the community of Downtown West, and Stephen Avenue is a natural pedestrian corridor between Contemporary Calgary and the downtown core.

Now is the ideal time to clearly define a vision for the next iteration of Stephen Avenue. This will include defining the experience of the pedestrian mall and extending that experience westward.

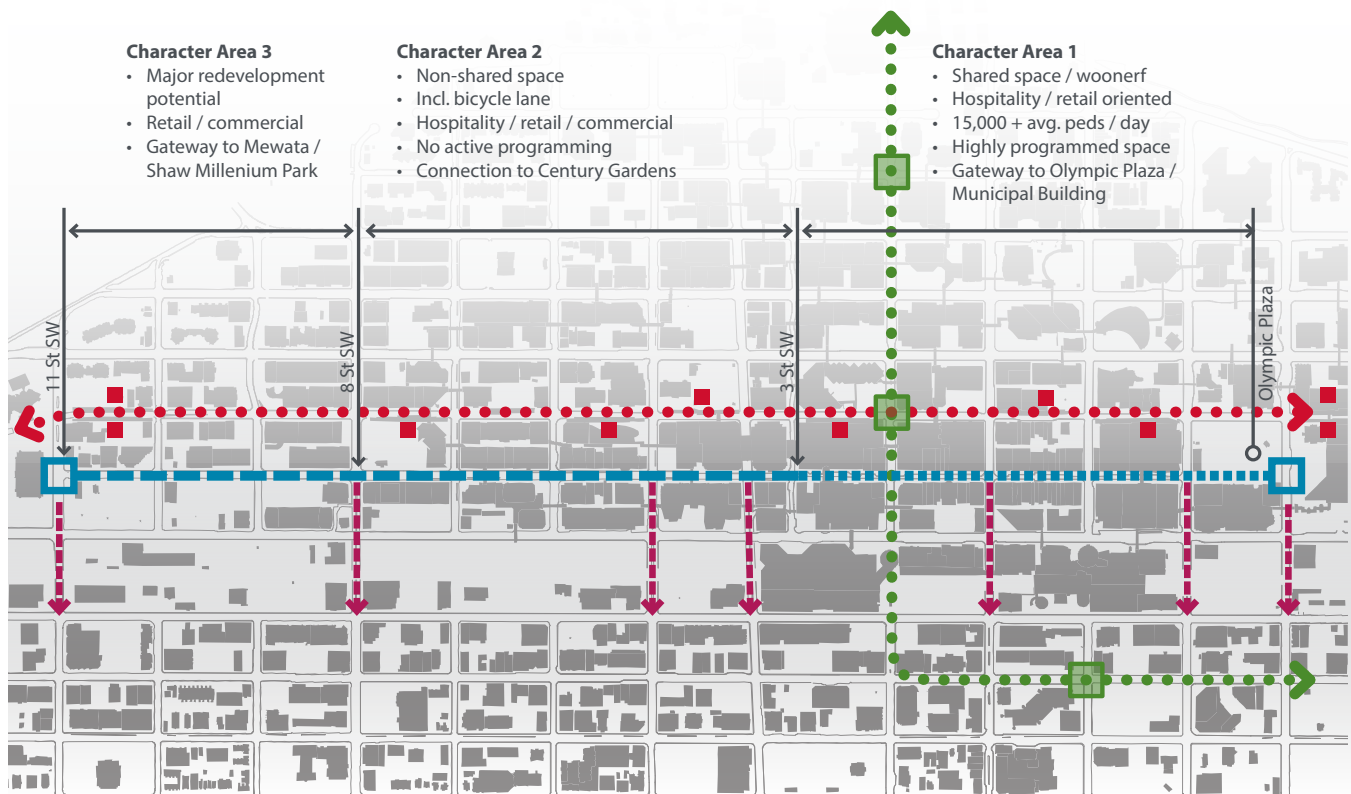
## 2. Purpose of the Project

*We are looking for a team to develop fresh ideas for the entire length of Stephen Avenue from Olympic Plaza to 11 Street SW. The project team will spark a conversation about how Stephen Avenue can reach its fullest potential as a unique destination and place, and will communicate those ideas in a manner that is not only innovative and exciting, but demonstrates how those ideas can be translated into meaningful actions.*

This project team will do more than create another master plan for a piece of public realm. The team will carefully curate a vision for an urban experience that will inspire our citizens; that evolves and responds to its context as people move along the avenue; and that adapts to rapidly evolving modes of entertainment, retail, communications, technology and mobility.

This vision will set the stage for a transformation of Stephen Avenue, and will solidify its position as Calgary's most iconic street. The vision will reach beyond the conventional realm of urban design, it will encapsulate ideas around programming, business, retail and hospitality, urban development, planning and policy, temporary and permanent art installations, tactical urbanism, and maintenance and operations.

Figure 1: Project Boundary



## 2.1 Project boundary + area of influence

The study area includes Stephen Avenue and 8 Avenue SW from Olympic Plaza to 11 Street SW. Throughout the study area, the character area of the street transitions from a pedestrian-oriented “shared street” or “woonerf” on the eastern boundary to a conventional two-way street on the west boundary. The high concentration of ground-oriented retail and hospitality on the east shifts in character towards office and commercial space to the west. The far western reach includes large parcels of undeveloped surface parking lots and low-rise buildings.

The project team will be expected to think beyond the study area and to conceptualize an “area of influence.” This will carefully consider the user’s experience as she or he flows along, through, and beyond the physical limits of the street into adjacent office towers, residential buildings, cultural institutions, parks, and public transportation infrastructure.

## 2.2 Who is the project for?

This project will simultaneously consider three groups:

1. **Users** are the downtown office workers, shoppers, fun-seekers, citizens and visitors who occupy the space. They animate the space, support local business, socialize, hang out, and have fun along Stephen Avenue. Their voices will be heard in this project through ongoing, genuine public engagement efforts. The ultimate success of this project is decided by users: do they like it? will they come more often? will they choose Stephen Avenue as THE place to go?
2. **Occupants** are the business owners, employees and organizations who live or work on or near the avenue. They rely on Stephen Avenue for their livelihood. As people who spend time here everyday, they innately understand the needs of users, and have unique needs of their own. Their voices will be heard through targeted stakeholder workshops, surveys, as well as public engagement efforts.
3. **Owners + Caretakers** are the developers, building owners, property managers, business associations, and City departments who take care of the physical assets along Stephen Avenue. Their voices will be heard through targeted stakeholder workshops, one-on-one meetings and other means.

*Image 1. Looking east from the 40th floor of 700 2nd St SW (former Scotiabank building)*

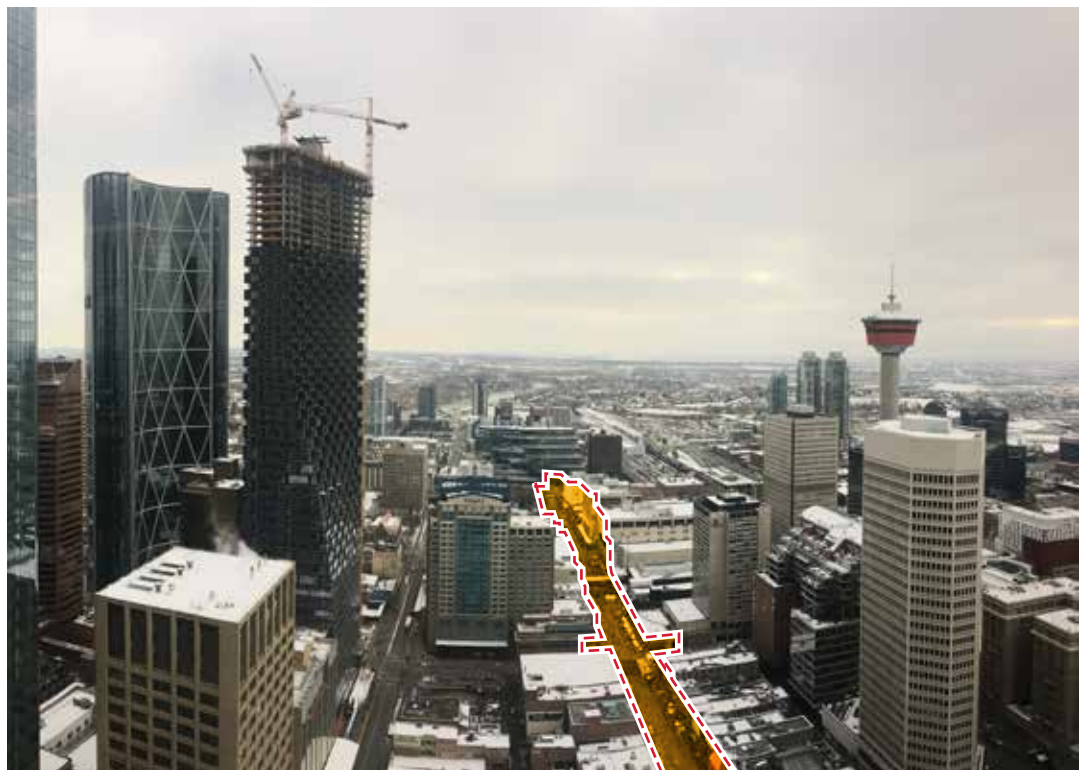
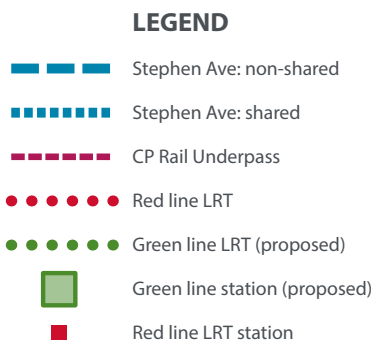


Figure 2: Vision, Goals and Objectives





## 3. Vision, Goals and Objectives

*Our project vision is straightforward. Make Stephen Avenue Calgary's most iconic and exciting street by leveraging the existing elements that make it a great space – pedestrian friendly, prominent location; a balance of historical and contemporary buildings; and an abundance of destinations and things to do.*

This project will set the stage for achieving the vision by exploring opportunities and generate ideas to achieve the following goals: (1) animate public life, and (2) reimagine the public realm. Within each of these goals, The City has identified numerous objectives that address known issues and opportunities. The project team will use these as the basis of understanding for advancing the project further, and pushing the boundaries of possibility.

### 3.1 Goal #1: Define the Experience + Animate Public Life

Defining the Stephen Ave experience is one of the primary goals of this project. The experience offering will draw people to Stephen Ave who will, in turn, animate the street, support local businesses, and instill the avenue with a sense of excitement.

*Image 2. The intersection of 1 St SE and Stephen Ave*



#### **Objective #1: Increase street activity during peak and non-peak periods. All day. Every day.**

One of the objectives of the project is to find ways to increase activity along the avenue at all times of day, every day of the week, and throughout each season. On average, over 15,000 pedestrians per day stroll along Stephen Avenue, making it the street with highest volume of pedestrians in the City. The area is extremely busy on weekdays, particularly during lunch hour and after work.

When office workers vacate the core, animation and usage of the street dramatically declines (ie. evenings and weekends). Furthermore, pedestrian activity steadily declines to the west of the study area (11 St SW), receiving only 10% of the pedestrian traffic as the busiest portions of the pedestrian mall (2 St SW).

**Project Outcomes: The project will include strategies for design and programming that will improve animation of the street, particularly during non-peak periods.**

**Objective #2: Establish a vibe that addresses existing character, heritage and attracts and sustains a range of established and unique business activity.**

Stephen Avenue is a major attraction and amenity for residents and employees who reside in or near downtown, as well as tourists visiting the area. The high concentration of heritage resources, cultural destinations, retail, entertainment, and hospitality businesses attract people by providing numerous amenities and conveniences of daily life.

Further investigation is required to understand how investment in the public realm can attract new businesses to the area — particularly west of 3rd Street SW where at-grade retail activity drops off. Furthermore, the interaction between business activity at grade and the public realm requires further study to understand how to maximize the Stephen Ave experience. This may involve reconsideration of how businesses can occupy the public right of way as a space of commerce, public enjoyment, advertisement, pop-up retail, and a myriad of other innovative uses.

**Project Outcomes: Identify ways to attract private investment along Stephen Avenue. Propose a “big idea” for the entire area that will not only enrich the user’s experience, but allow business to cater to and enhance that experience. This may include blurring the boundaries between public and private space.**

**Objective #3: Create something for everyone, celebrate fun, and encourage social mixing**

Stephen Avenue is used by a wide diversity of people of all ages, gender orientations, cultures, and economic backgrounds. In response to this diversity, Stephen Avenue should provide a variety of spaces and programming opportunities that accommodate a spectrum of users rather than favouring the needs of a narrow range of demographics. In addition, we live in an age where intolerance and fear of socio-economic diversity threaten our divide our society. In spaces such as Stephen Avenue, the street can serve as a “civic commons” and encourage people who are different than ourselves to interact, share common experiences, celebrate diversity, and build a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Within this context of diversity, Stephen Avenue should also offer a unique experience. Through programming, events, retail and hospitality offerings, The City, business owners, Calgary Downtown Association, and other partners can deliver this unique and authentic “Stephen Ave” experience.

**Project Outcomes: Devise strategies for design and programming that promotes social mixing and inclusivity. Propose ideas that are fun, innovative, affordable and can pique the interests of visitors and citizens.**

*Image 3. The summer market in front of Hudson’s Bay is a popular summer attraction*



**Objective #4: Find ways to address social disorder and help citizens feel safe**

Many stakeholders and citizens have commented that they feel uncomfortable or unsafe in specific, isolated segments of Stephen Avenue. Some of the reasons for safety concerns in these nodes include: aberrant social behaviour; visible presence and unsolicited interactions with homeless individuals; open consumption and/or trafficking of illicit substances; and other social issues.

Efforts undertaken to address these issues of social disorder to date include: enhanced levels of maintenance to remove litter and maintain an orderly appearance; increased police presence along the street; increased presence of private security forces patrolling private properties; and, removal of public seating in areas of high incidents of social disorder.

**Project Outcomes: Find ways to make citizens feel safer (without sterilizing the public realm) through the application of CPTED principles, bylaw improvements, or other design and programming initiatives.**

### **3.2 Goal #2: Define the Space + Reimagine the Public Realm**

Stephen Avenue is one of Calgary's longest-standing urban experiments. Since the idea of a pedestrian mall was conceived in the 1960s until today, the avenue has been continually redesigned, reconfigured, and reprogrammed to meet the changing needs of users, occupants and owners. This project is an opportunity to pause, evaluate, and reimagine how Stephen Avenue could be improved to support Goal #1 — Reanimate Public Life.

**Objective #5: Improve year round pedestrian connectivity from end to end and within the area of influence.**

Citizens highly value the pedestrian nature of Stephen Avenue, particularly along the pedestrian mall from Olympic Plaza to 3 Street SW. They have said it's a great place to go for a stroll, especially on warm days. West of 3 Street SW, the pedestrian experience declines. There are fewer grade-oriented attractions to users, narrower sidewalks and a general decline in urban vibrancy in this area.

Citizens are generally less inclined to walk along Stephen Avenue at night and on quiet weekends. They cited safety concerns, lack of events and activities, and a lower resident / worker population in the downtown at these times as primary reasons for not using the area.

According to pedestrian counts, pedestrian use of Stephen Avenue steadily declines during periods of poor weather, with winter being the lowest period of use. There are no amenities on the street catered to winter usage.

**Project Outcomes: Identify strategies to strengthen pedestrian usage along the avenue, particularly west of 3 Street SW.**



## Objective #6: Balance mobility for everyone — pedestrians, cyclists, goods, and vehicles

Along the pedestrian mall, vehicular access is limited to emergency and service vehicles only from 1 Street SE to 3 Street SW during the day, leaving the street open for pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy. During non-peak hours, vehicles are allowed along the mall.

Citizens have mixed feelings about vehicles and parking on Stephen Avenue in the evenings. Some feel that passenger vehicles should never be allowed, and that the combination of patios, parking and vehicles pinches leaves too little space for pedestrians to feel comfortable. Others like the convenience of parking, and the benefits of additional “eyes on the street” to address social concerns during non-peak hours.

Furthermore, some citizens have expressed a desire to make the street more pedestrian oriented west of 3 Street SW, where the pedestrian mall ends. This would provide an added benefit of creating connections to additional north-south underpasses at 4 Street, 5 Street and 8 Street SW, but would create conflicts with vehicles accessing 9 Avenue SW and other adjacent roads.

In June 2015, a cycling ban on Stephen Avenue was lifted as part of The City’s Downtown Cycle Track Pilot project. In December 2016, the Council voted to make the cycle track pilots permanent following an evaluation period and preparation of a summary report (City of Calgary, 2018).

Today, some citizens and stakeholders have expressed concerns over cyclists on Stephen Avenue, indicating that some of the performance metrics and objectives may need to be re-evaluated to devise new strategies to improve overall citizen satisfaction with cyclists and pedestrians sharing Stephen Avenue Mall, as well potential improvements of the cycle track from 3 Street SW to 5 Street SW. Additionally, new modes of transport have yet to be considered for Stephen Ave, including e-bikes, scooters and electric mobility devices.

NOTE: detailed pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular data is available at: <http://www.eco-public.com/ParcPublic/?id=4190#>

**Project Outcomes: Evaluate the feasibility and pros/cons of: improving pedestrian circulation west of the pedestrian mall; restricting vehicular access, goods movement and/or parking within the pedestrian mall; improving the sharing of space between cyclists, pedestrians and non-traditional modes along the pedestrian mall.**

*Image 4. The pedestrian mall at lunchtime is crowded with pedestrians, particularly during major conferences at the Telus Convention Centre*



**Objective #7: Give users, occupants and owners an accessible, flexible space**

One of the things that currently makes Stephen Avenue successful is its inherent short-term flexibility. The street changes character from day to night with the incorporation of vehicles and parking during non-peak periods. The pedestrian mall is routinely used for major events, marches, street celebrations and markets. This day-to-day flexibility allows for a wide range of uses.

Mid-term flexibility for Stephen Avenue is slightly more limited. As patios are put into storage over the winter months, there are no new uses that replace this space or animate the space. Further consideration over how Stephen Avenue should adapt from summer to winter is required.

Long-term flexibility for Stephen Avenue is also limited. If the urban experiment of Stephen Avenue has proven anything, it's that shifting needs of Stephen Avenue should be expected. As new modes of transportation evolve (bike share, car share, e-bikes, autonomous vehicles), the correct modal balance along Stephen Avenue will also change. Additionally, as new trends in office, retail and hospitality emerge, how will tenants occupy at-grade commercial and

office spaces? While there are no clear answers to these long-term demands, there are opportunities to design the street to be flexible and adaptable to future uses.

Accessibility should also be considered when determining ways to increase flexibility — the street remain must accessible to users with mobility limitations in any configuration.

**Project Outcomes: Articulate short, medium and long strategies for a flexible street. Find ways that will allow it to evolve, to adapt, and to remain useful for a long period of time at minimal expense.**

*Image 5. Seasonal lighting enlivens Stephen Avenue Mall during the dark winter months*



## **Objective #8: Propose temporary measures to address life-cycle deterioration of the public realm**

Along the length of Stephen Avenue, some physical assets have exceeded their anticipated life cycle. In the short-term, it is necessary to provide temporary repairs to the public realm before larger life-cycle improvements are undertaken. The result is a patchwork of materials — asphalt, concrete, mortar, paint — which detract from the aesthetics and user experience of public realm. While successfully addressing essential safety concerns in the short-term, the accumulation of these patches requires some additional operational investments.

**Project Outcomes: propose solutions to the patchwork of materials. These can range from whimsical to practical; artistic to pragmatic; and ephemeral to longer term.**

**Temporary measures can be used as an opportunity to test innovative ideas, take risks at relatively low cost, and continually change the look of the avenue.**

## **Objective #9: Maximize return on investment**

Given economic constraints for capital projects, the project will need to demonstrate that investments made in public realm improvements will benefit local businesses, citizens at large, visitors, The City and stakeholders. This would include demonstrating the value of Stephen Avenue in attracting new businesses to the Centre City. Increasingly, corporations and businesses look at the amenities that a potential location offers as these play a significant role in attracting and retaining employees.

Design improvements will need to strike the right balance between meeting the project vision, durability, maintenance considerations, and capital costs.

**Project Outcomes: The proposed public realm design will maximize public benefit by demonstrating the value of investments made in the public realm. The project team will propose creative solutions to incorporating existing assets that work well, minimizing capital costs, maximizing operational budgets, and seeking unconventional modes of funding construction and operations.**



# Transformation Plan

*Transforming Stephen Avenue will occur incrementally, through a combination of programs, activities, short-term investments and long-term investments. The City will collaborate with local businesses, landowners and developers with the common goal of allowing Stephen Avenue to reach its highest potential.*

The transformation of Stephen Avenue will occur through a three step process. The plan is summarized below, and is described in greater detail in the figure on the following page.

In Step 1: Understand Stephen Avenue, which is currently underway, The City of Calgary is working with stakeholders and citizens to formulate a high level vision, goals and objectives for the project.

In Step 2: Rethinking Stephen Avenue, The City will assemble a project team of consultants and internal resources to conduct further research, develop planning and design recommendations, and author a Master Plan Report.

In Step 3: Refresh Stephen Ave, The City and stakeholders will collaboratively implement short and long-term investments in the area.

Investments will include efforts to animate the public realm, as well as renew the physical condition and character of the street. Upon completion of these investments, ongoing maintenance of the street and operation of programs will ensure that the area continues to attract users and serve as a destination within the Centre City.

*Image 6. The artistic “Galleria Trees” provide visual interest, but also pinch the pedestrian realm near Bankers Hall*



## Step 1. Understand Stephen Avenue

## Step 2. Reimagine

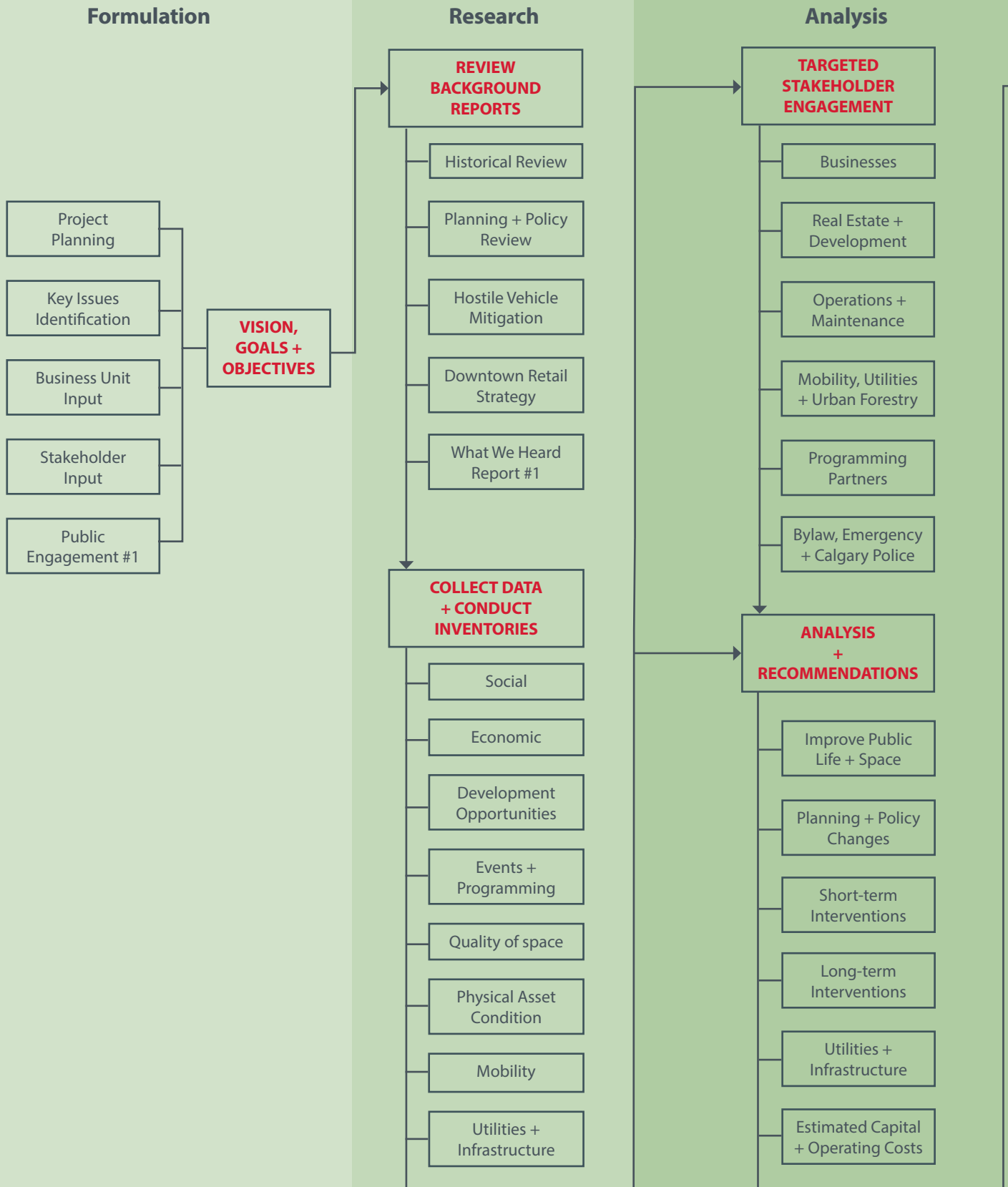


Figure 3: Stephen Avenue Transformation Plan

# Stephen Avenue

# Step 3. Refresh Stephen Avenue

## Planning + Design

### PRELIMINARY PROGRAMMING + DESIGN CONCEPTS

- Translate recommendations into concepts
- Identify metrics for measuring success
- Estimated Capital + Operating Costs
- Prepare for presentation

### PRESENTATION + EVALUATION OF CONCEPTS

- Steering Committee Evaluation
- Design Refinement
- Stakeholder + Public Engagement

### FINAL CONCEPT DELIVERABLE

- Short-term Interventions
- Long-term Interventions
- Implementation Strategy

## Presentation + Implementation

### PRESENT AND FINALIZE PROJECT PLAN

- Grand Vision Presentation
- Refine + Finalize Master Plan
- Evaluate Funding Opportunities
- Finalize Implementation Strategy

### STEPHEN AVENUE INVESTMENT + IMPLEMENTATION

- Short-term Public Investments
- Long-term Public Investments
- Ongoing Private Investment
- Adopt Planning + Policy Changes
- Comprehensive Program Strategy (all stakeholders)
- Comprehensive O+M Strategy (all stakeholders)

## Operations + Enjoyment

### PUBLIC ENJOYMENT OF STEPHEN AVENUE

- Attract Business, Residents + Visitors
- Innovative Programming
- Year-round Activity
- A Thriving Economic + Social Environment

### OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE AND MONITORING

- Monitor O+M Strategy
- Monitor Asset Condition
- Monitor User Satisfaction
- Ongoing Evaluation of Management Agreements
- Ongoing Evaluation of Maintenance + Operations Budgets
- Adaptive Operations + Management



## 4. Relevant Background Information

*The following sections summarize background information relevant to the Stephen Avenue Master Plan. This includes: engagement findings; relevant plans and policies; and examples of relevant programming and design precedents.*

### 4.1 Relevant City Plans + Policies

The following is a list of relevant plans and policies that relate to this project. Plans and policies noted with an asterisk (\*) are publicly available documents. The remainder will be released to the successful proponent of the RFP.

- Historical background report
- Centre City Plan\*
- Stephen Avenue Mall Management & Operating Agreement
- Calgary Land Use Bylaw (1P2007)\*
- Calgary Streets Bylaw (20M88)\*
- 2014 Stephen Avenue Mall Tree Replacement Briefing Note
- Calgary Downtown Association Programming Policy and Programming Strategy (if available)
- Centre City Urban Design Guidelines\*
- Centre City Guidebook\*
- Downtown Cycling Strategy\*
- Pedestrian Strategy\*
- Calgary Access Design Standards\*
- Hostile Vehicle Mitigation Strategy
- Calgary Downtown Retail District Strategy\*
- engage! Policy & Engage Framework and tools\*

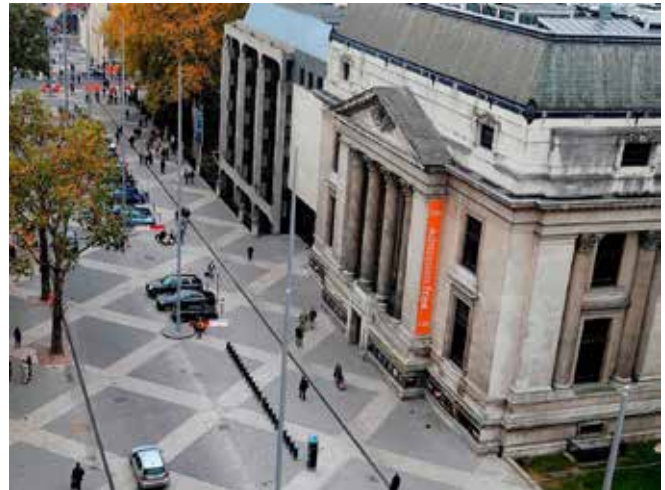
### 4.2 Programming + Design Examples

The following is a list of relevant projects and initiatives that can serve as precedents for demonstrating how Stephen Avenue could be transformed.

#### **Exhibition Road, London UK**

An example of a universally accessible, flexible shared street that can be easily reconfigured to suit programming and mobility needs.

<https://www.publicspace.org/works/-/project/g069-exhibition-road>



### **New Road, Brighton UK**

Prior to construction of England's first shared space in 2007, New Road had yet to reach its full potential as pedestrian oriented, urban attraction. Since conversion, pedestrian activity has increased by 62% and vehicular traffic dropped by 93%.



### **People Spots, Chicago, IL**

A City-endorsed parklet program aimed at providing comfortable public spaces for everyone.

[https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdot/supp\\_info/make\\_way\\_for\\_people/people\\_spot.html](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdot/supp_info/make_way_for_people/people_spot.html)



### **Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, Ottawa, ON**

The City of Ottawa is undertaking a similar effort to revitalize North America's first pedestrian mall.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/public-engagement/projects/sparks-street-public-realm-plan>

A summary of public engagement findings and functional plan options is available in the draft plan: [https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/default/files/sparks\\_publicrealm\\_plan\\_en.pdf](https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/default/files/sparks_publicrealm_plan_en.pdf)

In 2018, The City implemented a pilot program to generate renewed interest in the area, and explore new ideas for what Sparks Street could look like. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/new-sparks-street-features-garner-optimism-from-city-mixed-reviews-from-ottawans>



### **Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety, Various, Worldwide**

Across the world, urban intersections and road right of ways across the world are being transformed into pedestrian friendly spaces.

<https://www.bloomberg.org/program/public-health/road-safety/#get-involved>

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2018/sep/20/goodbye-cars-hello-colour-the-great-reinvention-of-city-intersections>



### VW Fun Theory

As part of a marketing program, car maker Volkswagen staged a series of placemaking interventions in the public realm to change behaviours and get citizens to “do the right thing.” These fun, whimsical installations became topics of public conversation, animated the public realm, and resulted in increased rates of positive citizen behaviour.

<https://goodvertising.site/the-fun-theory/>



### Child Friendly Edmonton

The City of Edmonton is undertaking efforts to make public space more child friendly, as well as recognize child friendly businesses

[https://www.edmonton.ca/programs\\_services/for\\_children\\_kids\\_youth/child-friendly-edmonton.aspx](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_children_kids_youth/child-friendly-edmonton.aspx)

### Christmas Markets, Varies, Worldwide

Christmas Markets are traditional seasonal events throughout Europe, with North American cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Denver, Chicago and others.

<https://www.insidevancouver.ca/2018/11/13/german-style-vancouver-christmas-market-returns-to-downtown-nov-21-dec-24/>



### Aires Libres, Montreal, QC

This annual celebration on the pedestrian street of Sainte-Catherine Street combines visual arts, performing arts, temporary design interventions and patio culture in Montreal's Gay Village.

<http://www.aireslibres.com/en/about>





## Appendix A. Understanding Stephen Avenue: What We Heard

# Understanding Stephen Avenue

## Studying Public Life + Public Space

Stakeholder Report Back - What We Heard – October 29, 2018



### Project Overview

The City of Calgary is undertaking a Master Plan for Stephen Avenue, with the intent of enhancing our city's most iconic and memorable street. The Stephen Avenue Streetscape Master Plan will focus on 8 Avenue S. in the downtown core – from Olympic Plaza (Macleod Trail S.E.) to Mewata Armoury (11 Street S.W.).

As one of Calgary's premiere landmarks and destinations, a Master Plan is needed to:

- **Extend the energy and liveliness** of the pedestrian mall westward along 8 Avenue S.W.;
- **Establish a new vision** for Stephen Avenue that creates opportunities for private investment and redevelopment;
- **Create short and long-term strategies** that can be implemented over time to make Stephen Avenue better for Calgarians and visitors.

### The Study Area

#### **Character Area 1: Olympic Plaza to 4 Street S.W.**

- The pedestrian mall from Olympic Plaza to 4 Street S.W.
- Regularly programmed for events and activities
- Primarily hospitality, entertainment and retail providers
- Historic sandstone buildings and character recognized on registry of National Historic Sites



# Understanding Stephen Avenue

## Studying Public Life + Public Space

Stakeholder Report Back - What We Heard – October 29, 2018

### Character Area 2: 4 Street S.W. to 8 Street S.W

- 2-way roadway, cycling facility, and sidewalks from 4 Street S.W. to 8 Street S.W.
- Includes commercial and office space as well as hospitality and retail providers

### Character Area 3: 8 Street S.W. to Mewata Armoury

- 2-way roadway, no cycling infrastructure, deteriorating sidewalks from 8 Street SW to Mewata Armoury
- Major redevelopment potential
- Gateway to Shaw Millennium Park

## Engagement Overview

As a first step in the planning process, The City reached out to citizens, stakeholders and visitors to better understand the public life and public space of Stephen Avenue. The input from this phase will be used to inform the development of preliminary concepts in the next phase.

## What We Asked

Through sounding boards, pop-up engagements and an interactive online mapping tool, we asked what people enjoy or like about the Avenue, what they don't like and what could be improved. This report encompasses the insight gained through these opportunities and includes opinions and perspectives on the area's activities and events, public safety, social issues, aesthetics and design, mobility and functionality, retail and services, as well as history and placemaking.



Throughout September and early October 2018, **501** comments were received through a series of engagement opportunities. Specifically, these included sounding boards installed in three locations (one in each character area of the study), three pop-up engagements held to coincide with existing events along the Avenue, and an interactive online mapping tool where visitors were asked to 'add a marker' on a map of the study area and elaborate on what they liked about the location, didn't like or what could be improved.



# Understanding Stephen Avenue

## Studying Public Life + Public Space

Stakeholder Report Back - What We Heard – October 29, 2018



### What We Heard

Most of the ideas and comments gathered fell within the following themes:





# Understanding Stephen Avenue

## Studying Public Life + Public Space

Stakeholder Report Back - What We Heard – October 29, 2018

The summary below provides a snapshot of the general sentiments shared within each of the themes.



### Key Findings per Character Area

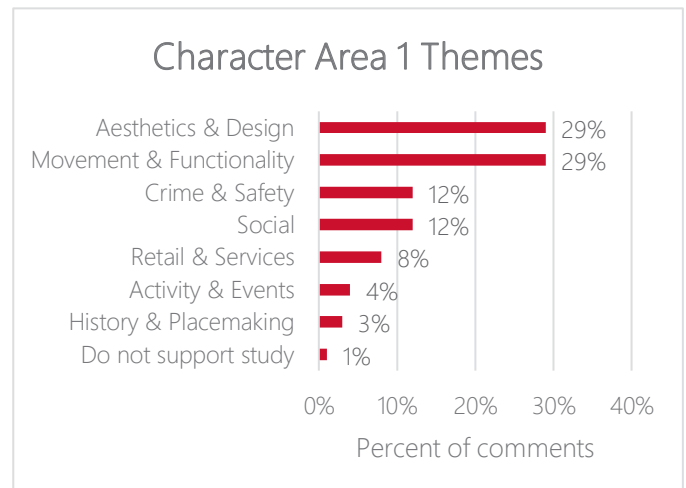
Through the public engagement process, City planners and staff have come to understand what citizens, stakeholders and visitors like about Stephen Avenue, what they don't like and what improvements they would like to see.

#### Character Area 1: Olympic Plaza to 4 Street S.W.



#### #1 Aesthetics & Design – 29%

Many respondents commented they like and/or would like to see more trees, greenspace and greenery in this area, as well as more art and lighting. A few commented the area can feel cold and uninviting, and that efforts to make it feel





# Understanding Stephen Avenue

## Studying Public Life + Public Space

Stakeholder Report Back - What We Heard – October 29, 2018

warmer and friendlier would be appreciated. There were multiple comments about the need to redevelop or upgrade Olympic Plaza and how the design of the Glenbow Museum building negatively impacts the pedestrian experience. There were many positive comments about the rainbow crosswalk, with some suggesting The City include art at other crosswalks as well. Other specific suggestions for Area 1 included raising the flower planters, removing the white tree sculptures and opening the patios up to the sidewalks.



### #2 Movement & Functionality – 29%

There were many comments made around how the existing design and infrastructure impacts the experience of moving through the Avenue, as well as who should and who should not have access to travel along it. Multiple respondents called for a ban on cars (sometimes including taxis in that sentiment), while others would like a ban on cyclists. There was support for cycling however, by others who like bike lanes and the interaction of modes and would like to see bike parking and better cycle track connections. Several comments reported unsafe interactions between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, and the need for a better-defined cycle track. There was mention of the sidewalk areas being tight, the need for an improved street surface, and the desire for improved connectivity (including better access to the new library). Other specific suggestions for Area 1 included installing European-style bollards, extending the pedestrian hours (when vehicles are not allowed) and improving street crossings and swing gates.



### #3 Crime & Safety – 12%

Nearly all the respondents who addressed crime and safety report not feeling comfortable or safe in Area 1, especially at night. Social factors such as the homeless population, incidents of violence, panhandling, and drinking and drug use, were all reported as factors in this. Vehicles and parked cars were mentioned as a safety issue in that they create unsafe conditions for people crossing the street. McDonalds and the C-Train were identified as specific problem areas, with multiple respondents calling for increased police or security presence.



### #4 Social – 12%

Respondents feel that there is lots of room for improvement in the social experience of this character area. It was repeatedly referenced as a dead zone, and further described as 'not lively', 'creates a break', 'breaks the flow and energy', 'dead and creepy'. There is a general desire for more activation and better continuity with the rest of the Avenue, including more activity, retail, art and an improved interface between the street and surrounding buildings. A few respondents mentioned liking the patios and the sunshine, but the presence of the homeless in the area is a concern for many, as is panhandling, loitering and cigarette smoke.





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### #5 Retail & Services – 8%

Nearly half of the comments received about the retail and service offerings of Area 1 were respondents sharing their appreciation for what currently exists, including liking the local businesses, the Glenbow Museum and the library bookshelf. A few potential improvements were suggested including encouraging higher quality retailers and vendors and improving or updating the Glenbow Museum. Other specific suggestions included the initiation of a Bike Share program and the installation of “engagement friendly” public art.

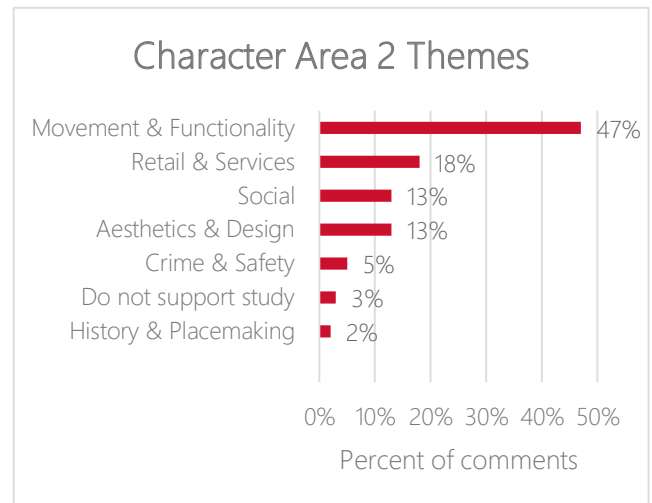
### Character Area 2: 4 Street S.W. to 8 Street S.W.



### #1 Movement & Functionality – 47%

Nearly half the comments related to Area 2 focused on the interplay of movement and functionality along the Avenue. Many respondents would support extending the pedestrian mall, especially if its improved connectivity with the rest of downtown and involved improving the street level

experience. There were concerns, however, that development could impact drop-offs, pick-ups, parking and access to retailers and services. Many of the comments focused on cycle track infrastructure, including the need for improved facilities, better definition of the cycle track, improved connectivity to the larger cycle track network and improved integration of the cycle track into the Avenue. There were multiple mentions of unsafe intersections and problems related to signal timing, resulting in unsafe interactions between cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles. Specific suggestions for Area 2 included banning cars and/or parking, improving the street surface, straightening the alignment of the cycle track, and encouraging cyclists to slow down.



### #2 Retail & Services – 18%

Comments were generally positive about the retail and service offerings within Area 2. Multiple respondents commented on how they like the CORE, with others sharing their appreciation for the Globe Theatre, the fitness facilities and the other shopping centres. Specific suggestions include improving the street frontage of the businesses, restoring the



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theatre, improving/adding connections to the Plus 15 network, opening patios to the sidewalks and adding more retail, restaurants and activities.



### #3 Aesthetics & Design – 13%

From the comments received, Area 2 is thought by some to be cold and uninviting, as well as somewhat discontinuous with the rest of the Avenue. Respondents feel that it would benefit from some upkeep and enhancement, with specific suggestions including adding art and lighting (such as gas lamps), planting more trees and greenery, widening the sidewalks and improve the buildings' facades.



### #4 Social – 13%

The social elements reported on in Area 1 carry over into Area 2. Respondents commented on the homeless population, issues with drinking and drug use, and the McDonalds and CTrain being problem areas. One respondent reported enjoying the pedestrian experience, the sunshine and the patios, while others felt this area is an uninviting 'dead zone' that would benefit from more activation and an increased police presence. Specific suggestions for Area 2 included improving the continuity with the rest of the Avenue, and adding more art, storefronts and other amenities.



### #5 Crime & Safety – 5%

The crime and safety themes mentioned in Area 1 are mirrored here. Many respondents don't feel comfortable or safe on the Avenue, there are issues with loitering and drug use, and McDonalds was identified as a problem area. Specific suggestions include increasing the police presence in the area and possibly gating the park at night.

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### Character Area 3: 8 Street S.W. to Mewata Armoury



#### #1 Movement & Functionality – 51%

Not many comments were received that reference Area 3 specifically but of those that were, movement along the Avenue was by far the most common theme. Within this theme, nearly half of the comments called for improved cycle facilities, including better definition of the cycle track and improving connectivity to the larger cycle track

network. Several respondents do not support an extension or major upgrade to the Avenue, citing access, parking and congestion as reasons against upgrades. Specific suggestions for Area 3 include expanding or improving the sidewalks, installing a continual open space parkway all along the Avenue and banning street level parking to improve the pedestrian experience.



#### #2 Aesthetics & Design – 15%

Respondents suggested revitalizing the space with lighting and art – with one respondent proposing a music/light show similar to Fremont Street in Las Vegas. There are comments suggesting improved continuity with the rest of the Avenue, disallowing or removing ground level parking lots, and increasing mixed-use development to improve the street level experience.



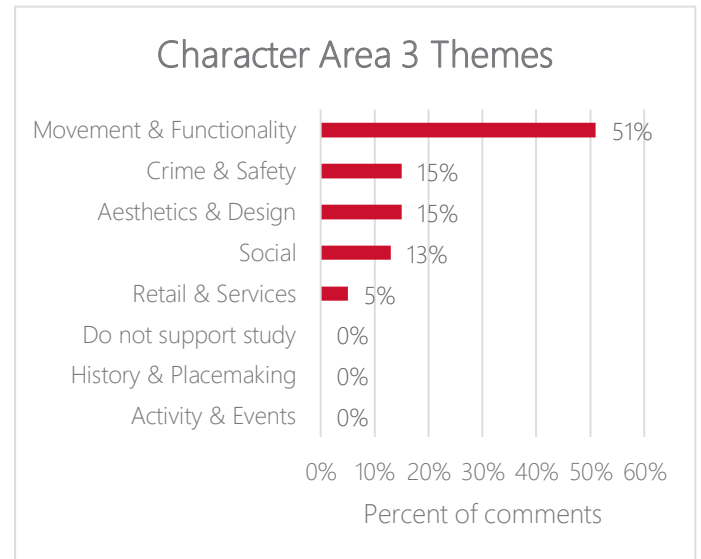
#### #3 Crime & Safety – 15%

The few comments received around crime & safety in Area 3 highlight issues with the homeless population, drinking and drug use, and concerns about the area being a hub for crime. Specific suggestions included increasing the presence of police and security and adding additional lighting.



#### #3 Social – 13%

Respondents who addressed the social aspect of the area identified the CTrain as a problem area and also call for an increase in police and security. Some commented on the unmet







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potential of the area and how it would benefit greatly from some activation and transformational development.



### #5 Retail & Services – 5%

There is a concern that extending the Avenue could interfere with available parking, and there were suggestions that the area needs more retail, restaurants and services.

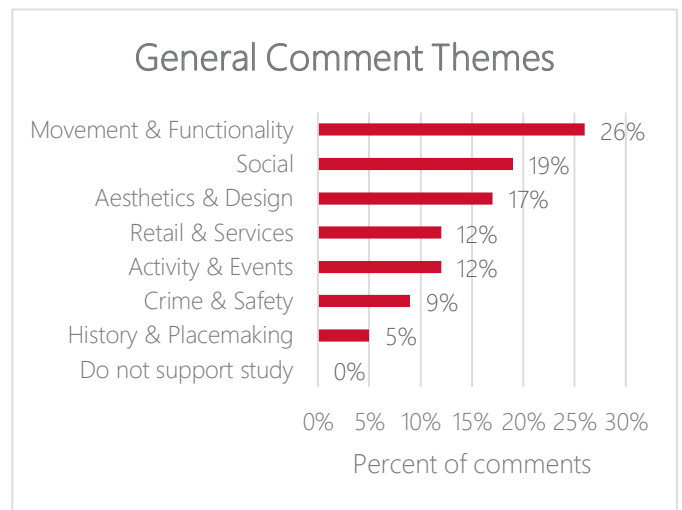
### General Comments



### #1 Movement & Functionality – 26%

Making Stephen Avenue pedestrian-friendly was the most commonly heard comment when it came to the Avenue as a whole. Many respondents shared how they enjoy the existing walkability, and nearly a quarter of the comments received about movement and functionality called for a ban on cars.

Other pedestrian-related comments focused on banning cyclists from the pedestrian mall and removing bike lanes, increasing the pedestrian-only hours, and improving the sidewalks. Those respondents who commented on cycling-related matters would like to see improved cycling facilities, better definition and/or separation of the cycle track and improved integration of the cycle track with the rest of the street. Access, drop-off, pick up and parking were identified by some as an issue, as was the need for an improved street surface. Better supporting the needs of diverse visitors was mentioned in terms of adding benches and seating (especially for seniors), washrooms and more shelter.



### #2 Social – 19%



Many respondents reported enjoying the social aspects of the Avenue and appreciated the overall 'vibe' of the space, the people watching opportunities, the absence of cars and the pedestrian experience. Many comments were made about the negative impact of smoking and cigarette smoke, as well as issues with the homeless population and with alcohol and drug use in the area. There is a desire for increased activation – especially at night and on the weekends – and improved efforts related to cleanliness and the provision of basic necessities (toilets, water, shelter).



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Some respondents would like to allow public drinking and to have patio season extended with the installation of warm-air heaters.



### #3 Aesthetics & Design – 17%

Respondents appreciated many things about the aesthetics and design of the Avenue, with the beauty of the area, the flowers and greenery, and the architecture and cobblestones topping the list. There is desire for even more trees, greenery and flowers, as well as more art and enhanced lighting. Comments about appreciating the cleanliness of the area were received, with others reported a need for more clean-up and maintenance including the suggestion of providing ashtrays. Many respondents enjoy the patios, and some would like to see patio season extended with lights and heaters. There is a desire for the area to be revitalized and enriched, with one respondent suggesting the East Village model be used as a guide.



### #4 Activity & Events – 12%

The bulk of the comments received about the activities and events on the Avenue were positive, with respondents sharing what they like about the current offerings and what they'd like to see more of. Respondents reported enjoying the buskers and street performers, live stages and venues, the music, the pop-up markets and the summer entertainment. Specific suggestions for improvement included 7-day-a-week vendors, more street cafes and music, more family-focused programming, more independent markets (including a farmer's market with food) and more performances and events (not just on Tuesdays).



### #5 Retail & Services – 12%

Again, the comments on the retail and service offering of the Avenue were primarily positive, with respondents identifying the specific businesses and retailers they enjoy most and what they feel the Avenue could use more of. Some suggestions for improvement included relocating the McDonalds, having retailers extend their hours, addressing vacant store fronts through rent control, and allowing pop-up wine and beer vendors.

## Next Steps

The input from this phase of the study will be used, along with input from the future phases, to inform the development of the Master Plan.





