

# The Future of Stephen Avenue

Calgary, Alberta



Calgary  
Downtown  
Association

+



+

Gehl

+



Stantec

+

jamesLIMA  
Planning + Development



...will define the direction of Stephen / 8th Avenue SW in the short, medium and long term.

Project background

# The Future of Stephen Avenue...

Why this project now?

- Stephen Avenue helps define the identity of downtown Calgary.
- Stephen Avenue is a critical amenity for attracting new businesses and tenants downtown.
- 1960s — Pop-up pedestrian mall  
1970s — Pedestrian mall v 1.0  
1990s — Pedestrian mall v 2.0  
2020s — Pedestrian mall v 3.0
- Physical conditions are deteriorating. A new plan for the street is needed.
- Clearly defining a path forward sends a positive message to property, business owners and Calgary.

2020s  
Re-imagine  
Stephen / 8th  
Avenue SW

A path towards success

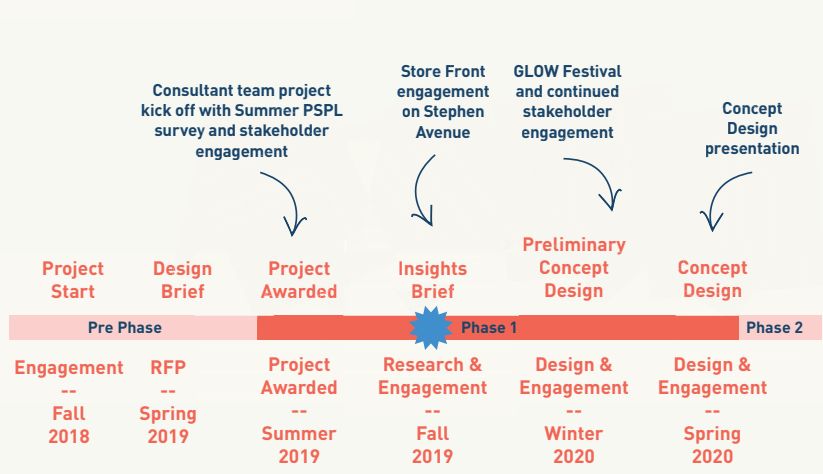
Success = Design + Governance + Economic Investment

Generating a bold and compelling vision for the future of Stephen Avenue will require new ways of working and thinking for the City of Calgary and its cultural and business partners. In order for any public space to thrive, like a garden, it must be actively cultivated.

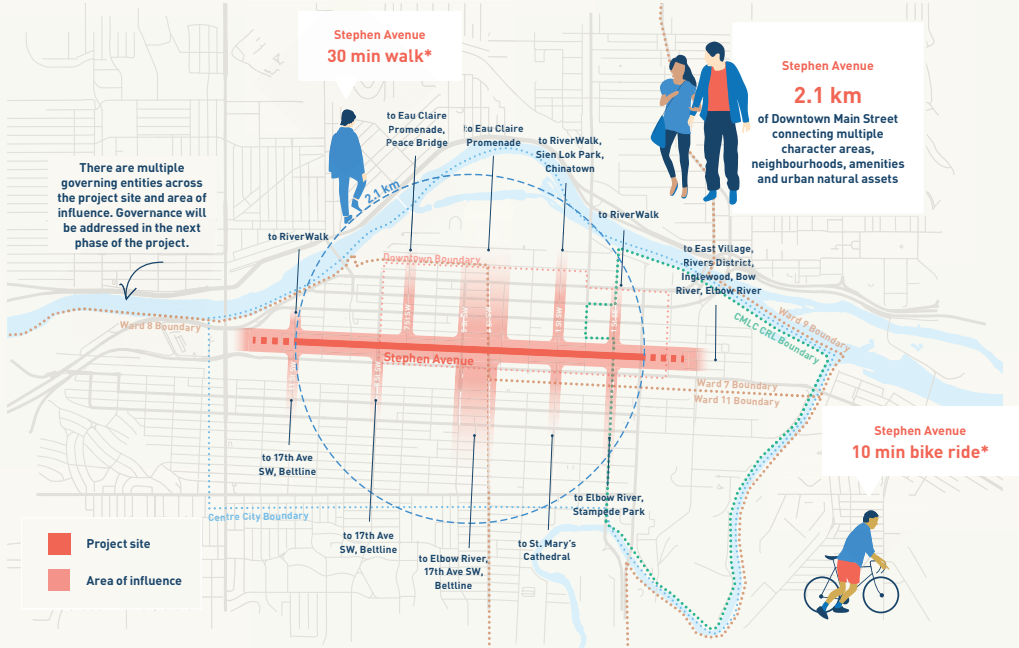
A great public space must be well located and well designed; seeded with the right combination of culture, commerce and play; and create authentic invitations for many people to care and participate in actively stewarding and caring for the space.

A beautiful new streetscape design is necessary but not sufficient to catalyze the transformation of Stephen Avenue. Great design must be paired with a robust program for economic investment and redevelopment and a strong framework for operations, maintenance and stewardship.

Project timeline



Project site and area of influence



Context

# Role of Stephen Avenue regionally

## → Calgary's place in the region

Calgary competes regionally with several peer metropolitan regions in western North America and across Canada for investment, talent and tourism.

Calgary is geographically isolated from other cities.

Within Alberta, Calgary has long been the primary economic and transportation hub within a broader economic corridor that includes Edmonton.

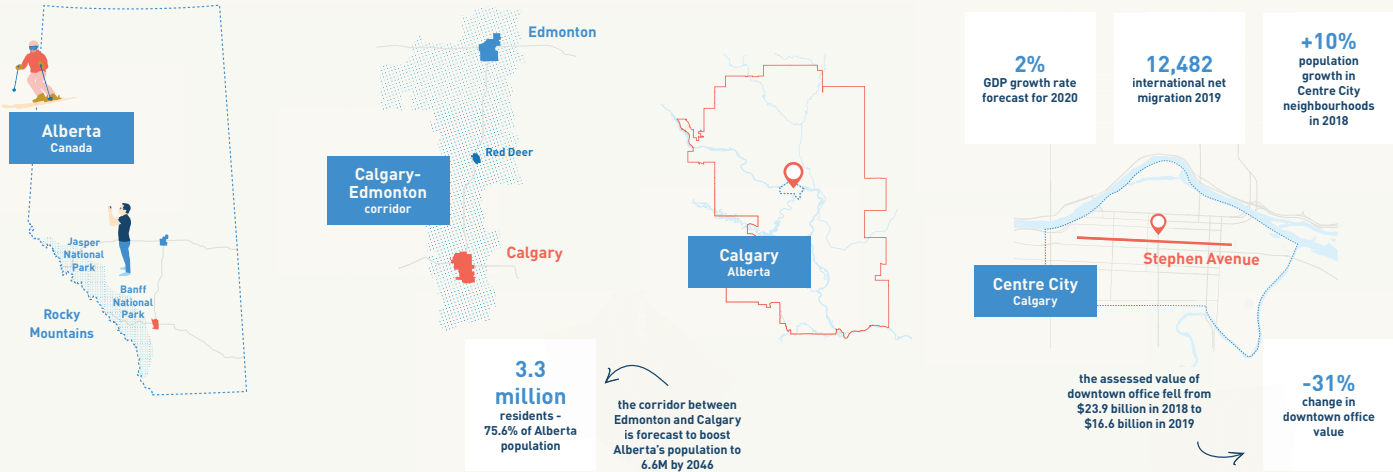
As a world-recognized livable city, Calgary has rapidly grown, attracting large numbers of migrants becoming the youngest population of major cities in Canada and the highest labour force participation of its peer metropolitan regions.

As a result of the energy sector, Calgary is a key economic driver within Canada and is home to a high ratio of the corporate headquarters per capita. The future of Calgary's economy will be heavily influenced by how we leverage the wider economic ecosystem within the region.



		Peer Region Indicators						
	Calgary	Edmonton	Vancouver	Toronto	Seattle Tacoma	Minneapolis Saint Paul	Denver	Austin
Regional Population	1,596,248	1,420,916	2,650,005	6,341,935	3,867,046	3,600,618	2,888,227	2,115,827
Annual GDP Growth	1.9%	1.9%	2.5%	2.3%	5.2%	2.2%	3.6%	6.9%
Working Population	73.7%	70.8%	67.5%	66.8%	68.4%	72%	71.2%	70.4%
Median Income	\$99,583 CAD	\$94,447	\$72,662	\$104,378	\$102,666	\$96,070	\$95,804	\$92,250
Median Home Price	\$419,400 CAD	\$319,200	\$990,600	\$805,500	\$626,750	\$341,750	\$562,375	\$394,875

\*Peer city economic indicators are based on 2018-2019 metropolitan region data



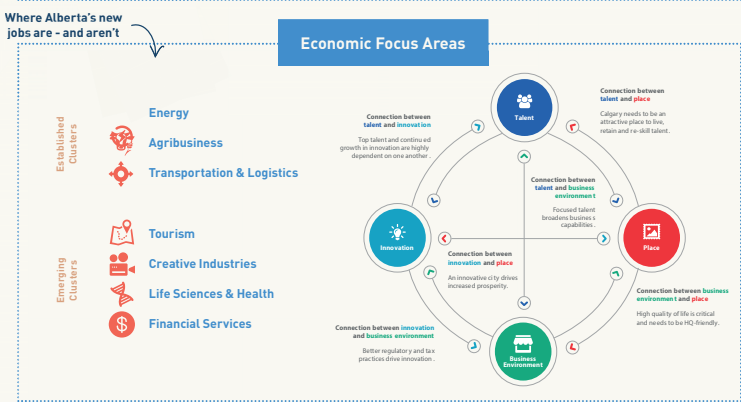
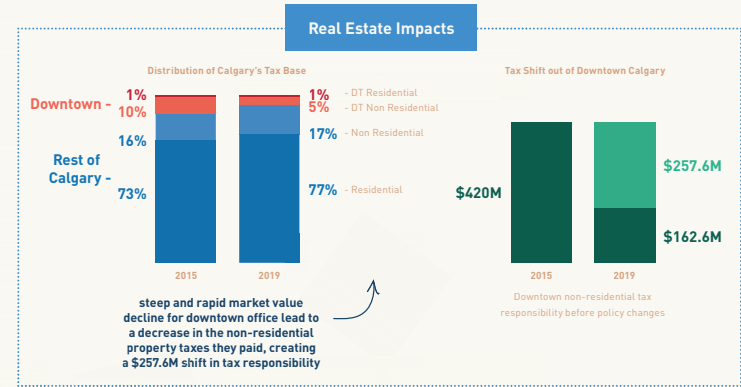
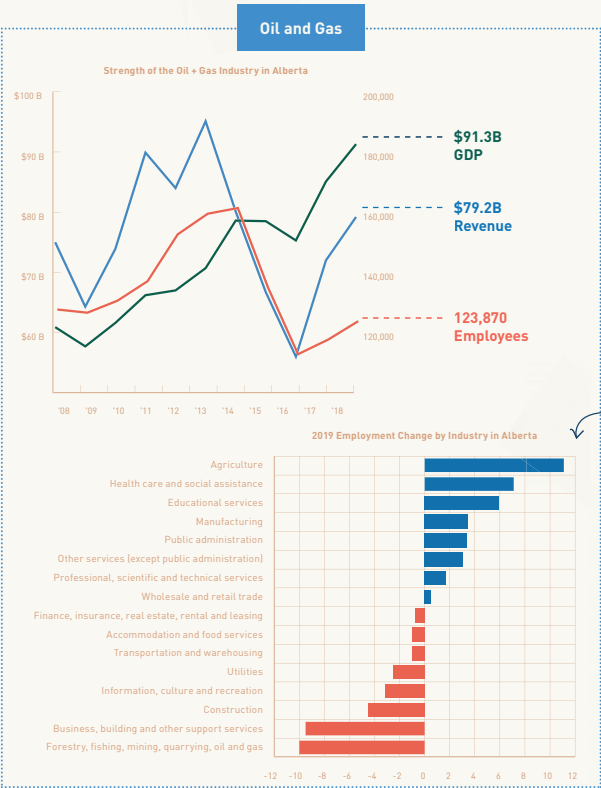
## → The changing economy

Structural changes in the global economy, as well as key industries including the oil & gas sector, are exerting significant impacts nationally, regionally, and locally.

As a result, Calgary has immediate and long-term challenges to address. Projections indicate slow growth however downtown real estate values need to recover and shifting tax burdens accounted for with a more resilient long term strategy. Calgary also needs to fully embrace the digital revolution and meaningfully diversify its economy in key industries, support innovation and startups, and strengthen its assets.

Calgary's downtown needs to adapt and reposition itself for these changes.

the oil and gas industry is adopting digital technologies, turning to new platforms that are increasing automation and precision - maximizing the value of their assets and lowering operating cost



\*Data Source Calgary Economic Development "Calgary in the New Economy"



Context

# Role of Stephen Avenue downtown

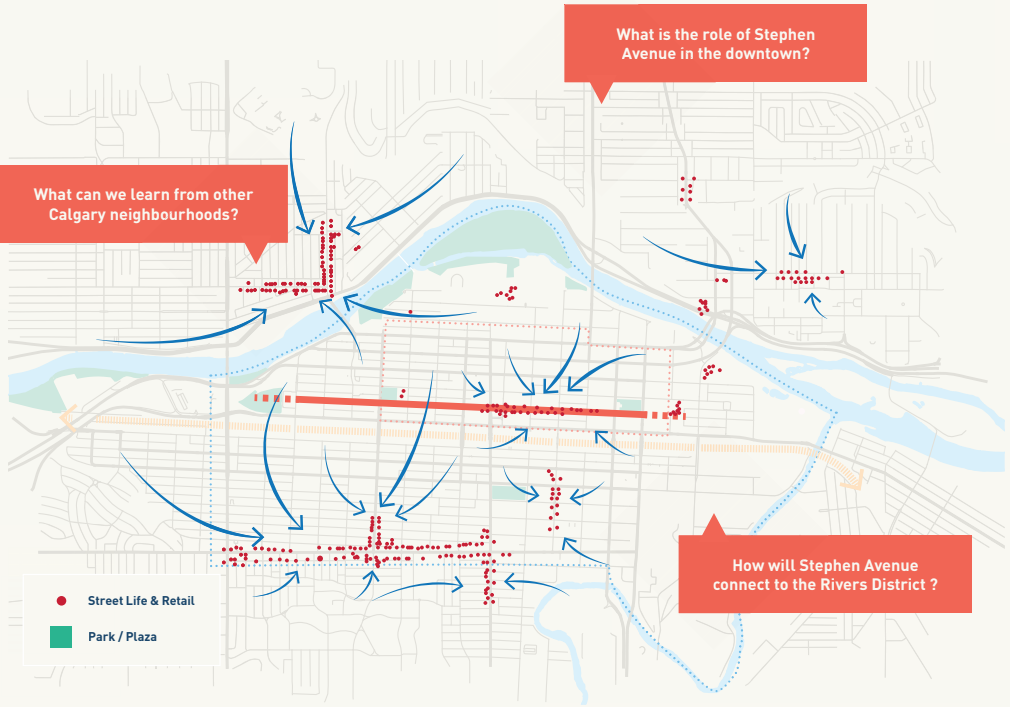
## → What is Stephen Avenue's role and identity in the future of downtown?

A central challenge of this project is clarifying and strengthening Stephen Avenue's role and identity in relation to other centres of vibrancy in and around downtown. Today, Stephen Avenue's public realm and public life profile are not well-positioned to embrace Calgary's future. The energy and vibrancy of the street today is not sufficient to attract investment from new industry partners. Other nearby areas such as Marda Loop, Beltline and Inglewood are out-competing the area from a cultural vibrancy perspective.

How can the City of Calgary build on the positive legacy of Stephen Avenue and the programming offered by the Calgary Downtown Association, Contemporary Calgary, the Arts Commons, SAPL and others to invigorate Stephen Avenue and enable the area to reach its fullest potential as a unique destination and place, whether it's during the day, evening or weekend and throughout different seasons?

## → Central Business Districts are home to great streets around the world

Cities and regions are investing in their downtown main streets as key pieces of their economic strategy to attract talent. As dynamic places that people want to be for working, living, shopping and entertainment, these investments are helping city centres flourish.



Everyday life on Stephen Avenue is tied to the 9-5 work day.



During large events, Stephen Avenue transforms into a platform for cultural activities.



\*Photo Source: Gottablogthis.com

What are some great global references?



Robson Street, Vancouver



16th Street Mall, Denver



New Road, Brighton, England



James Street, London, England

\*Data Source: Sydney's Building Boom, Only Just Beginning. Insights into Action, A Cushman and Wakefield Research Publication. September, 2017.

### Spotlight

#### George Street, Sydney

Transforming George Street into a world-class main street has bolstered Sydney's position as an innovative city able to attract new investment and a talented workforce. By reducing congestion and improving connectivity through the provision of light rail and a grand pedestrian boulevard – it has given much-needed breathing space in the heart of the city.



George Street Before

The City committed \$220 million to realise the project, unlocking Sydney's potential and strengthening George Street as a transport corridor as well as augmenting public life with new pedestrian spaces, new information signage, upgraded public squares, new street trees and innovative public art.

As a result of infrastructure developments in and around the CBD such as the George Street improvements, The Sydney CBD is currently experiencing an unprecedented level of development activity with a value of over \$62 billion that encompasses government infrastructure development, office, hotel and residential projects.



George Street After

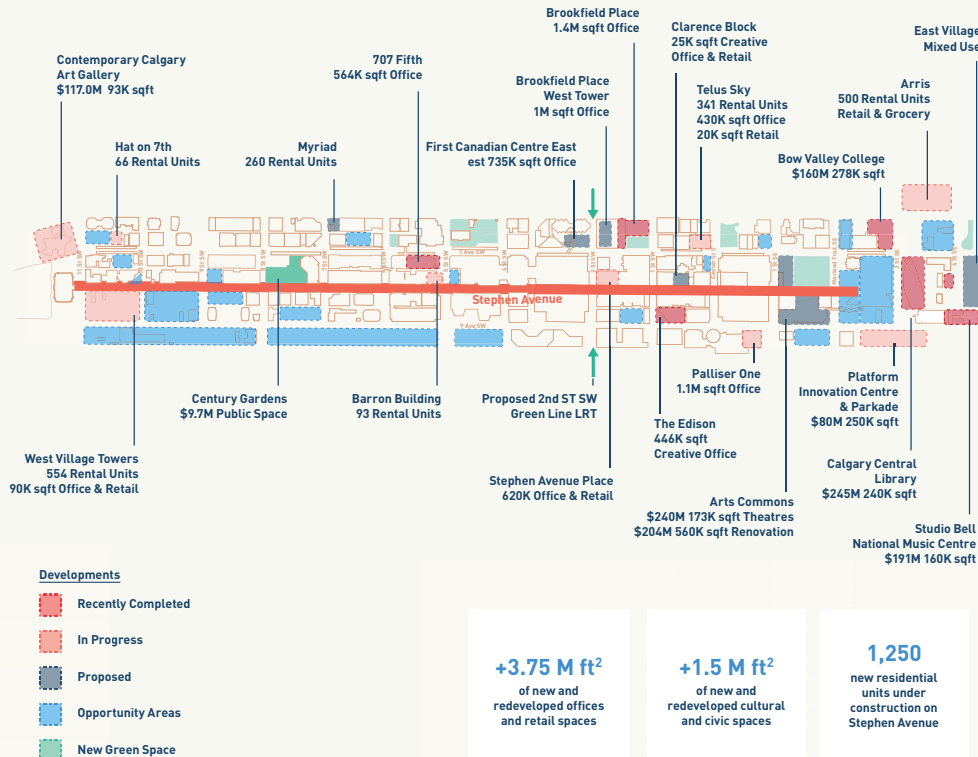


## Hunches

# Working on Stephen Avenue

## → Developments are changing the dynamic along Stephen Avenue

There is an opportunity to leverage downtown's assets and build on this momentum to establish a stronger identity for Stephen Avenue. Civic investments in infrastructure for connectivity and mobility, parks and public spaces, cultural assets, and economic hubs are catalyzing renewed interest in Centre City as a place for private investment and redevelopment. For example, downtown's first office-residential conversion is underway. To fully capitalize on this energy these destinations, neighbourhoods and new investments need to better work together as a network of complementary assets. Stephen Avenue can play a key role in solidifying Centre City as a place defined by and for all of its users.



## Spotlight

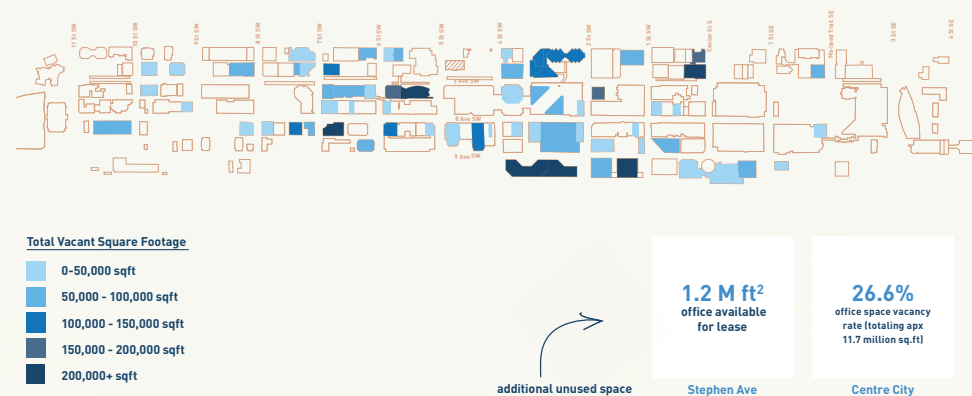
### The Edison

The Edison is a 30-storey, first of its kind office redevelopment in Calgary situated on 9th Ave and 1st St SW. Developed by Aspen Properties, the project is dedicated to developing a solid business community through cultivating connections and providing spaces that spark creativity. This includes uncommon spaces and ample amenities designed to ignite new ideas and spark creativity. Today the 446,300 sqft tower is home to MobSquad, Clio, chata.ai, Entuitive, and other trailblazing businesses.

The new public realm at The Edison (Aspen Properties)

## → High vacancy rates

The changing economy is reshaping how space along Stephen Ave is used. The 2016 recession's impact on the province's oil and gas industry produced significant vacancies downtown and along Stephen Ave, driving down assessed value, tax base, and rents. New office spaces and lease structures designed for today's more nimble economy is producing a trend of "reverse migration" bringing office tenants back into Calgary's core. This is also opening up Class B and C space as well as empty storefronts for re-imagining through interim uses, pop-ups, and experience-based retail.

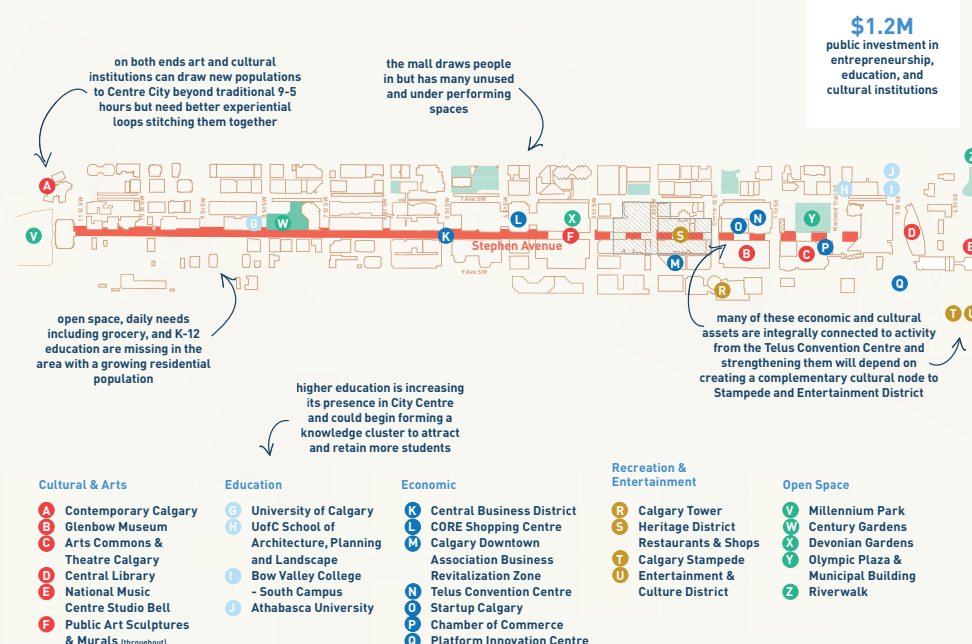


## Trends

- Proximity drives innovation
- Transdisciplinary collaboration
- Tech is infused across sectors
- Automation and AI
- Startups & co-working spaces
- Gig economy & remote working

## → Stephen Ave links social, cultural and economic assets

There is an opportunity for Stephen Avenue to connect the dots between new investments in economic incubators, civic hubs, and cultural institutions. Innovation economies like the one Calgary is growing are sustained by an ecosystem of cultural infrastructure which has the potential to generate an 18hrs day / 7 days a week experience that global talent is seeking. Stephen Avenue will need to better connect existing and new institutions, businesses, and key assets through physical improvements as well as operational and governance systems.



Capital follows talent. Talent follows place.

The future of work includes creative collaboration

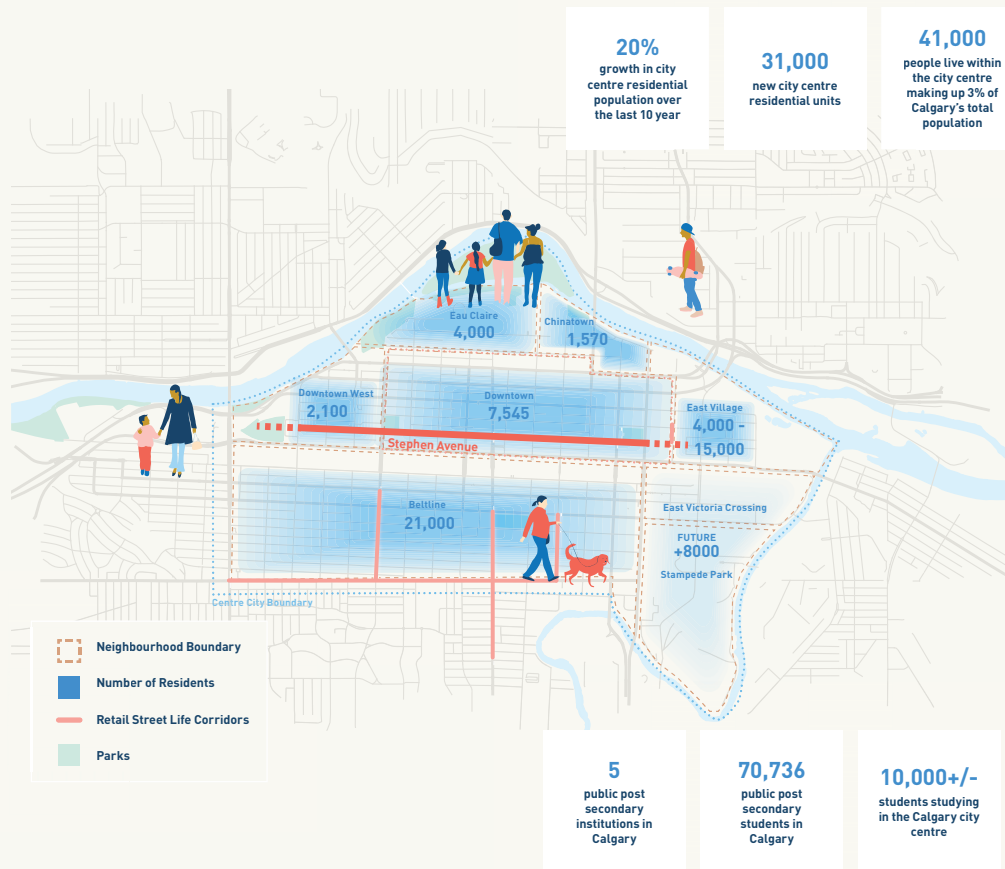


## Hunches

# Living on Stephen Avenue

## → People are looking to live in and around downtown

New centres of gravity in and around downtown show that there is an increased demand for urban living in Calgary. As is happening in other major cities, people are gravitating towards areas with amenities that support everyday life, such as grocery stores, schools, parks, civic / cultural institutions, bars / restaurants, retail and services. There is an opportunity to leverage this trend in and around Stephen Avenue. Downtown West is well positioned with a stock of lands prime for redevelopment.

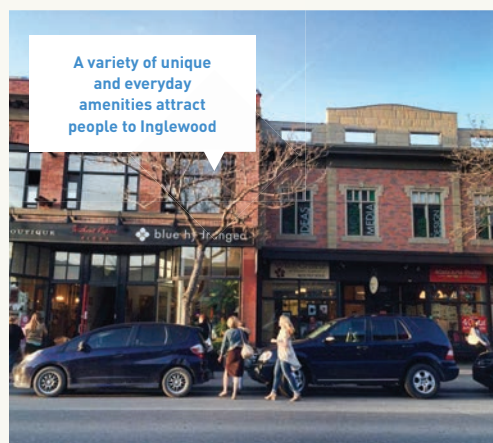


## Spotlight

### The Barron Building

The Barron Building is an 11-storey historical building located on 8th Ave and 5th St SW that was one of Calgary's earliest skyscrapers and home to its first oil and gas giants in 1951. In 2020, it will be a revitalized mixed-use apartment building with street-level retail space, and 93 rental suites with amenities. It will be the first residential rental property on Stephen Avenue in the downtown core and designed for Calgary's growing technology industry workers.

Artist rendering of the Barron Building (Strategic Development)



## Trends

People want to live in complete neighborhoods.

People want to live in complete neighbourhoods.

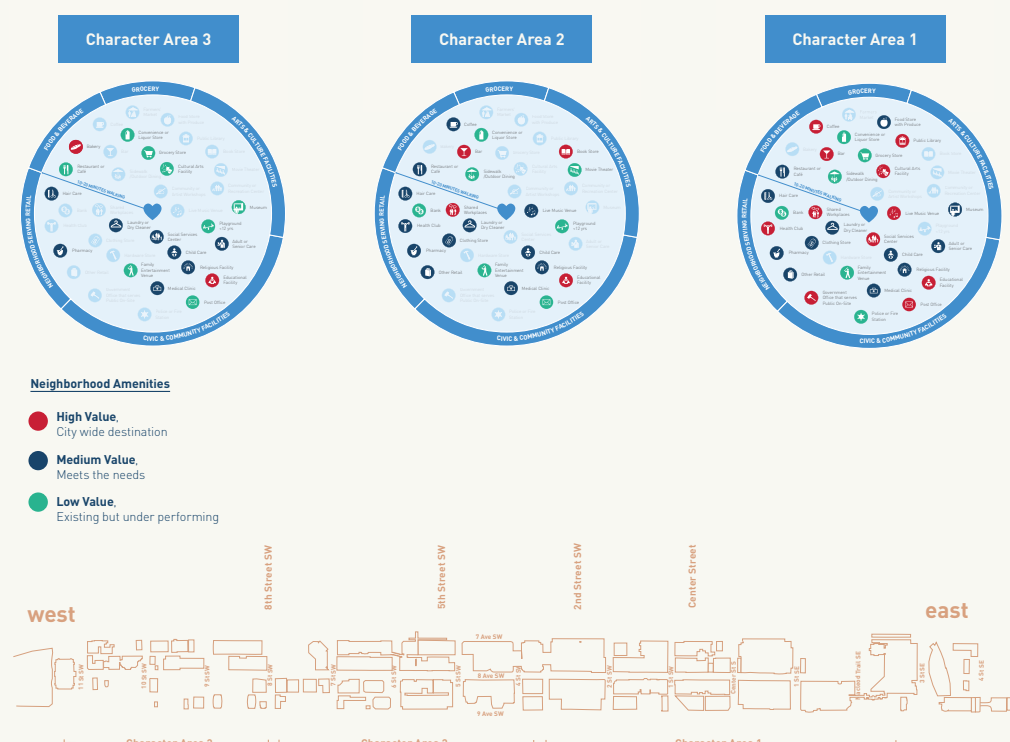
A complete neighbourhood is walkable and safe for all. It offers everyday life amenities within a reasonable walking distance from peoples' homes and local meeting places that can strengthen an active lifestyle and social connections.

It offers retail and job opportunities that can be beneficial for the local economy and help strengthen the neighbourhood in its' entirety.

Olympic Village in Vancouver is a sustainable mixed-use dense community with direct access to everyday amenities, a community center and urban nature.

## → Stephen Avenue lacks everyday amenities that make up a 'complete neighbourhood'

Overall, the downtown offers a range of everyday amenities and services. However, when looking more closely at the three-character areas defined in the City Vision for the Future of Stephen Avenue, the areas along Stephen Avenue do not provide all or amenities of high value for a complete, walkable neighbourhood.



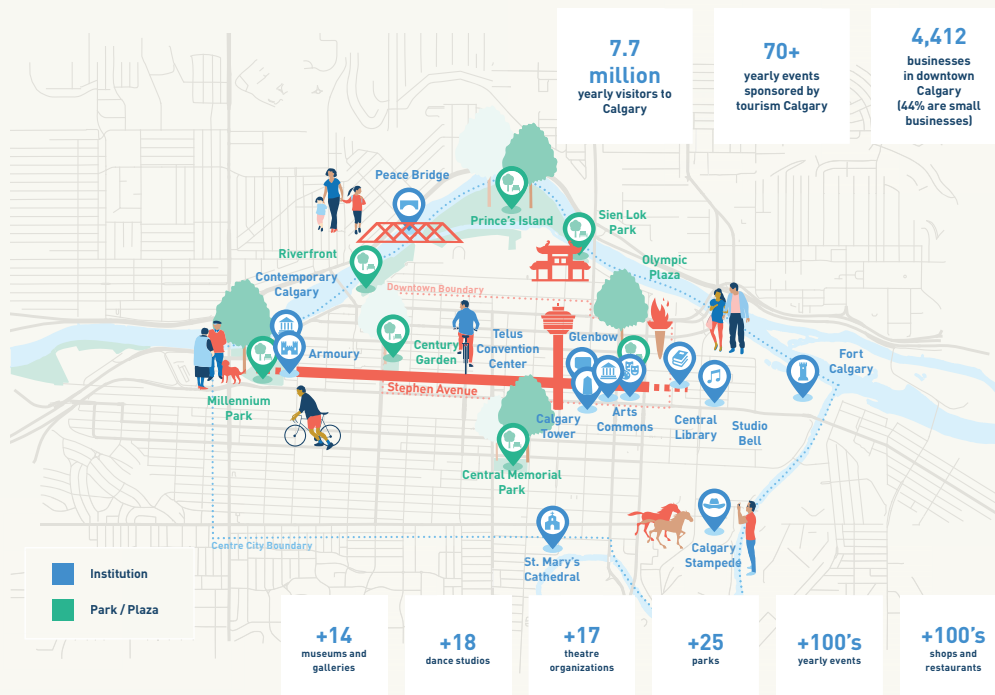


## Hunches

# Shopping + Entertainment on Stephen Avenue

## → Downtown has a wide array of cultural and recreational assets

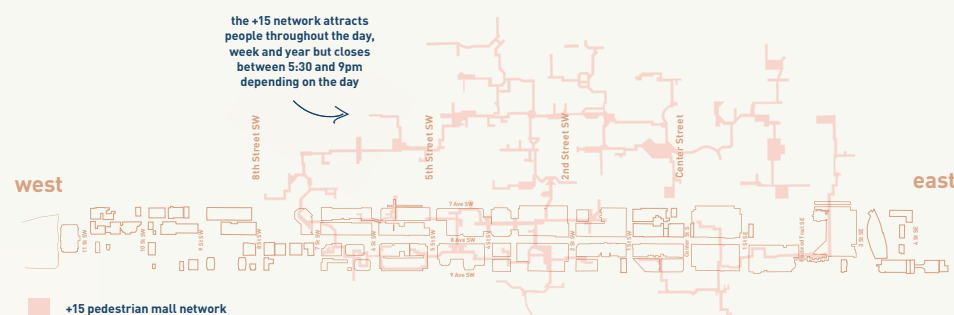
There is an opportunity for destinations, neighbourhoods and new investments to better work together as a network of complementary assets, and all better linked to Stephen Avenue.



## → The +15 network fractures the public realm on Stephen Ave

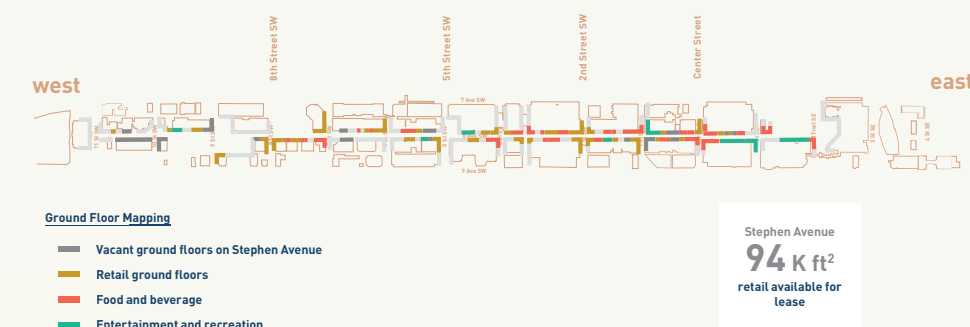
The conversation around the +15 system has long been a divisive one. There are its critics claiming the network robs the street of its vitality and its supporters touting comfort and convenience during Calgary's cold winter months.

Whether you are for or against the +15 network what's missing is any connection both physical and visually between the network and the street. Better linking the two could help break the perceived and real barriers caused by the +15 network.



## → High retail vacancy rates on Stephen Avenue

Current vacancies in existing storefront spaces between the central business core and Olympic Plaza are well positioned for interim uses, pop-ups, and experience-based retail.



## Spotlight

### Central Library | Calgary Public Library

2018 marked the beginning of a new chapter for Calgary, with the opening of a new cultural icon for the city: the Calgary Central Library. As a community hub, the 21st Century library is a critical piece of social, cultural, and economic infrastructure that helps the entire city succeed by serving as a centre of learning, professional development, wellness, and inclusion. This branch provides free resources, data access, research training, coding classes, welcome settlement services, and more.

The \$245M Central Library by Snøhetta is a key asset for Stephen Ave

2 million visitors to the Central Library in 2019!

## Trends

- E-commerce delivers goods
- Retail provides experience
- Brick and click stores
- Curating community
- Hybrid business models
- Customer-level data use

'Appear Here' is a rotating collection of pop-up booths in the UK for makers, crafters, designers and creators.





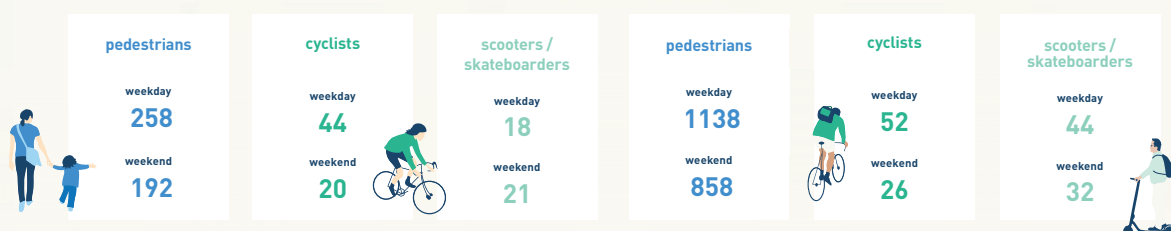
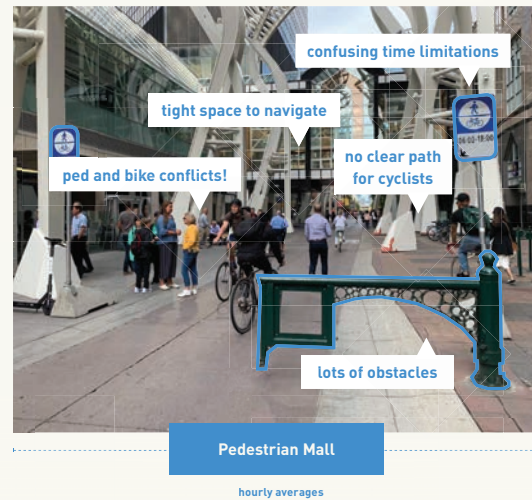
## Hunches

# Moving on Stephen Avenue

## → The street design today doesn't give clear mode priority

Unclear cues on Stephen Avenue create confusion for people walking and biking along the pedestrian mall and on 8th Avenue SW. There is an opportunity to create more real invitations for people walking, people on bikes, and micro-mobility users.

There is a need to improve connectivity within the overall pedestrian and bike network to create consistency and attract more multi-modal users downtown for users of all-ages and abilities.



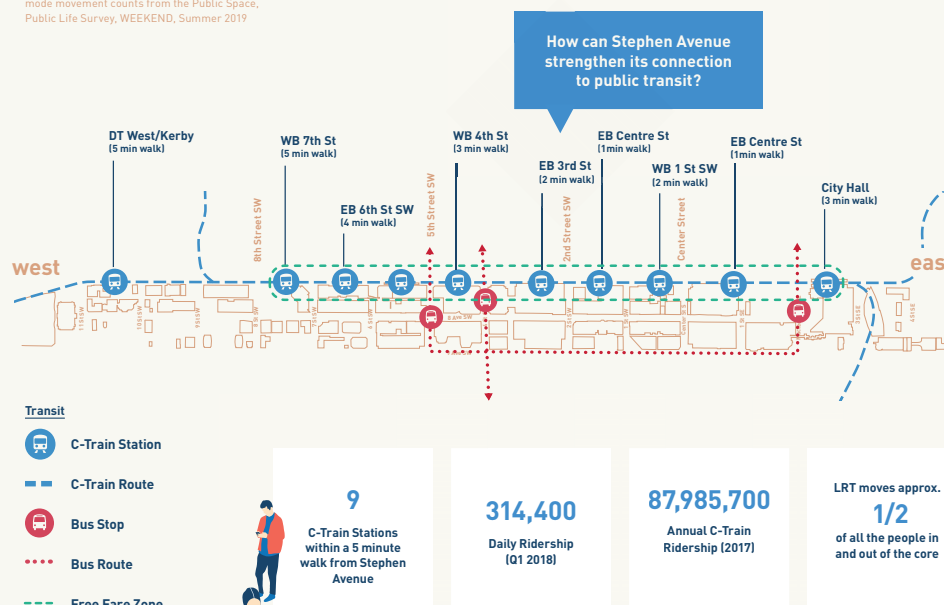
Hourly Averages, Stephen Avenue

\*Stephen Avenue hourly averages based on mode movement counts from the Public Space, Public Life Survey, WEEKEND, Summer 2019

## → Connections to and from public transit need strengthening

Calgary Transit is effective in bringing people to the downtown core. However, there is an opportunity to strengthen the connection between public transit and Stephen Avenue.

The pedestrian mall is in close proximity to public transit with access from the C-Train and Calgary Transit Bus services. Leveraging one of North America's most successful light rail transit systems could benefit the street.



## Trends

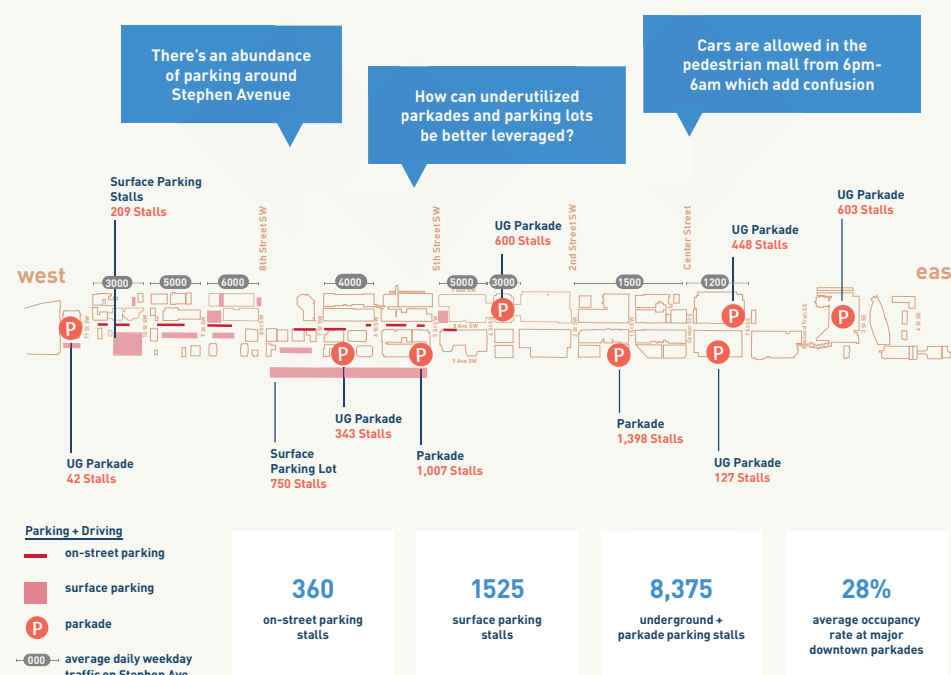
### New forms of mobility are influencing Stephen Ave

The introduction of micro-mobility has opened up a new category of mobility in Calgary, Mobility as Entertainment. Trips are now not only about the destination but rather the journey itself. The largest user group in this demographic is young people bringing a potential new subset of users to the downtown core through the rise of micro-mobility.

As mobility continues to evolve, designing a street that accounts for bicycle and scooter movement, parking (both permanent and shared) and interactions with pedestrians and retail will be vital to the future success of Stephen Avenue.

## → Is vehicle accommodation on Stephen Ave appropriate?

In the evenings (6pm - 6am) the mall is open to traffic and parking (eastbound only). At the time of its inception it was believed to be good for struggling businesses along the mall. While this makes for easy access for vehicles, space is taken away from pedestrians, and though cycling is permitted, it is confusing for both motorists and cyclists. Though the traffic moves slowly, the vehicle presence creates an unwelcome place for pedestrians.



The average number of daily e-scooter trips during the summer was 10,000

Scooters attracted teens to Stephen Avenue in the Summer of 2019





Hunches

# Spending time on Stephen Avenue

## → Commerce drives the majority of public life

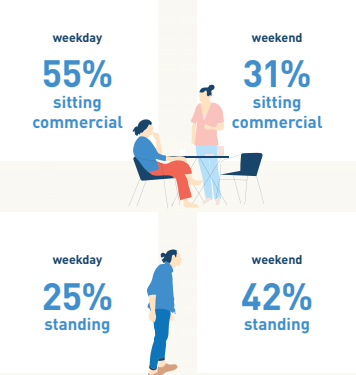
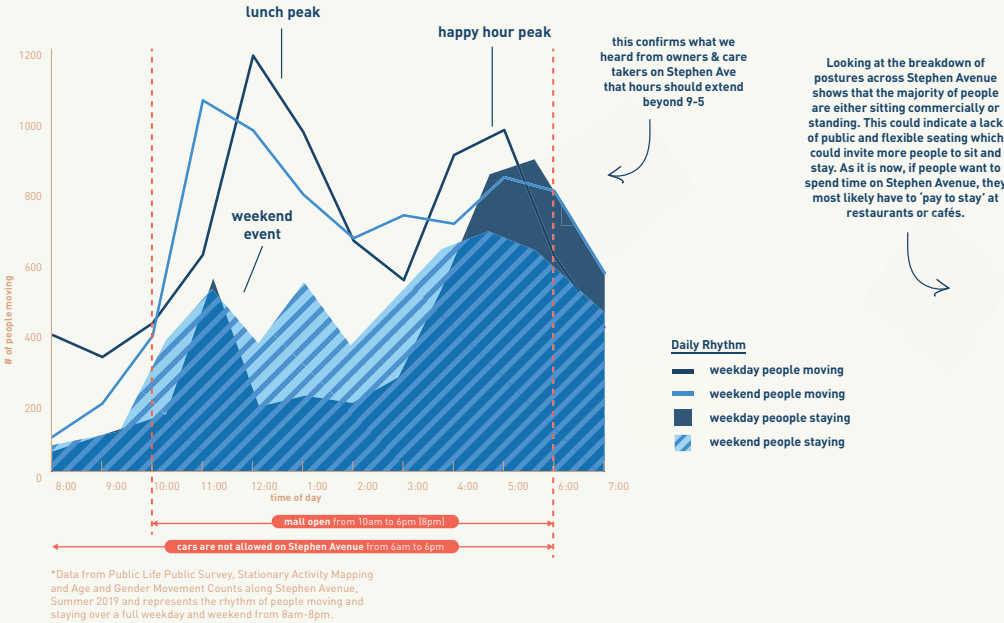
There is untapped potential for Stephen Avenue to diversify its public life profile and expand beyond commercial activity. While a lot of commercial activity is definitely not a bad thing, it's not enough to sustain a lively public realm throughout the day, week and year.

## → People aren't engaged in a diverse range of activities

People who spend time on Stephen Avenue aren't taking part in diverse activities which could indicate a lack of invitations. There's an opportunity to invite more people to Stephen Avenue by offering a greater variety of programming, such as activities related to active recreation or cultural events.

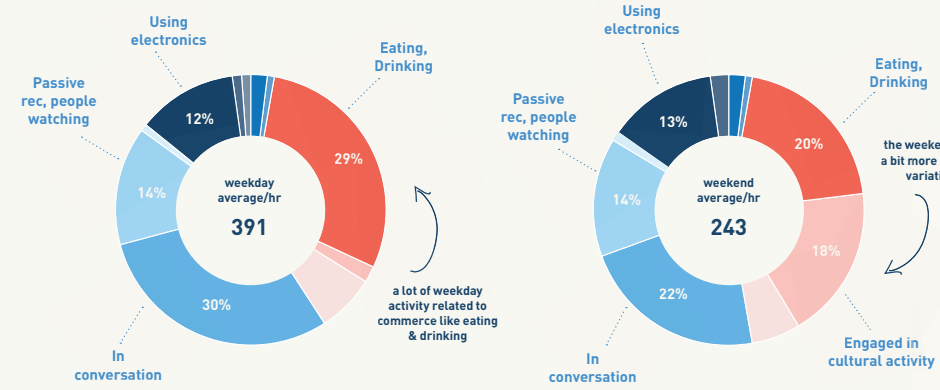
## → People spend time near active ground floors

There is a strong correlation between ground floor activity and the number of people who spend time in the area. Unsurprisingly, areas with a fragmented urban fabric, like the west end, see far fewer people hanging out in the public realm than areas with active ground floors. There's an opportunity to encourage varied ground floor uses that will create invitations for more people to spend time in the public realm.



\*Other recorded postures: WEEKDAY: Sitting Informal (10%), Sitting Public Bench (10%), WEEKEND: Sitting Informal (13%), Sitting Public Bench (11%), Other (3%)

\*\*Data from Public Life Public Survey, Stationary Activity Mapping along Stephen Avenue, Summer 2019 and represents a summary of the overall postures recorded over a full weekday and weekend, 8am-8pm.



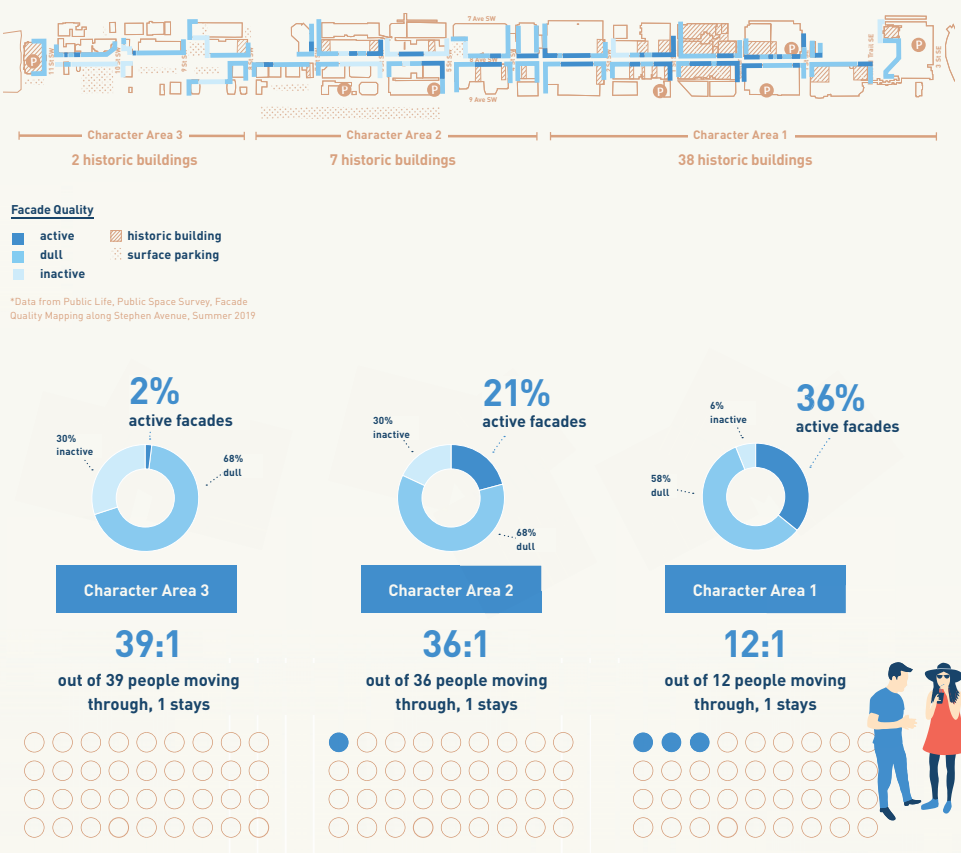
### Trends

### Expanding the Public Life Profile of Stephen Avenue

In the pre-internet age, the combination of entertainment and shopping fostered vibrant public spaces. Today changing consumer patterns are shifting towards on-line shopping and streaming content at home. This means that in order to attract people to downtown main streets there is a need to rethink the offering that these streets provide. Retail centres and districts around the globe are introducing cultural facilities, pop-up retail and unique events to entice visitors, and Stephen Avenue is strategically placed to become more than a shopping destination and offer everyday amenities and experiences that will draw more people, also outside of 9-5.

Proxy in San Francisco is a flexible space for art, food, retail and activations that celebrate culture, innovation, community and public life.

Situated on a development site, the Proxy project is temporary, now running its 8th year of weekly programming and every day services.



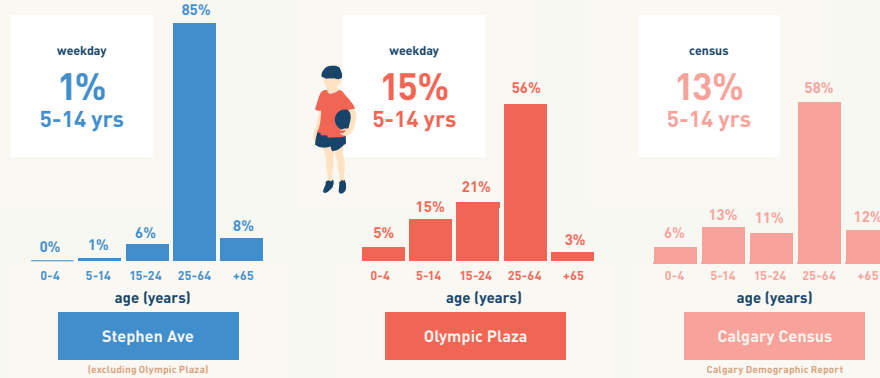


## Hunches

# Spending time on Stephen Avenue

## → Young kids and older adults aren't invited to spend time

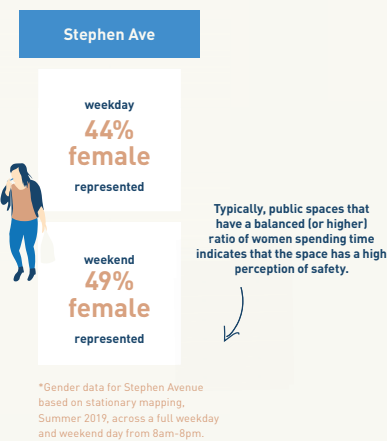
Stephen Avenue mainly attracts adults, from 25-64 years old. There's an opportunity to invite a broader range of ages, especially kids and teens, who are currently underrepresented on Stephen Avenue when compared to Calgary's census data.



\*Age data for Stephen Avenue and Olympic Plaza based on stationary mapping, Summer 2019, across a full weekday and weekend day from 8am-8pm.

## → There's an even breakdown of men and women

As a downtown main street, Stephen Avenue performs well when looking at how it invites both men and women. Generally, public spaces that have a balanced (or higher) ratio of women indicates a higher perception of safety.



\*Gender data for Stephen Avenue based on stationary mapping, Summer 2019, across a full weekday and weekend day from 8am-8pm.

## Trends

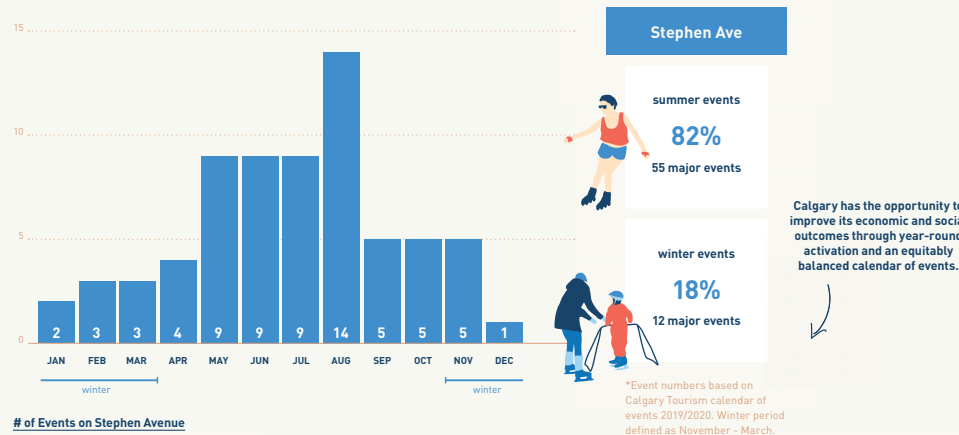
### Improving four-season programming on Stephen Avenue

Winter arrives every year in Calgary whether we like it or not! Cities such as Edmonton, Winnipeg, Oslo and Copenhagen have chosen to embrace the colder months, reclaiming the joy of winter and embracing the season so central to our identity as Calgarians. Stephen Avenue could benefit from a vision that celebrates and makes the best of winter; no longer viewing it as a time to shut things down and stay inside but as a time to get outside and enjoy the cold. The Calgary Downtown Association (CDA) has started to embrace this culture with the GLOW festival. The 2020 festival will be the most ambitious yet with world class programming and exhibits from across the globe.

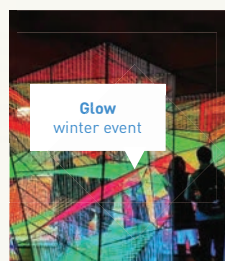
Started as an art + architecture competition in 2009 the Warming Huts embrace Winnipeg's famous cold winters.

## → Programing on Stephen Avenue is not equitably distributed throughout the four-seasons

Event programming is skewed towards the summer months when the street is already well populated. There's an opportunity to better leverage the shoulder seasons and winter months to attract more people to the street during the traditionally less used seasons.



# of Events on Stephen Avenue



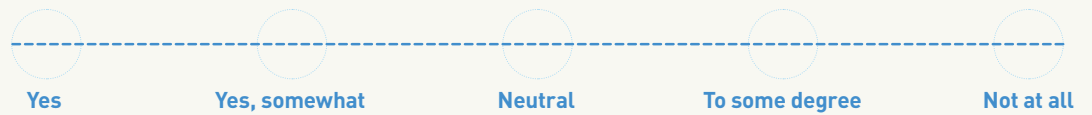
\* Photo credits: CDA

\*Event numbers based on Calgary Tourism calendar of events 2019/2020. Winter period defined as November - March.





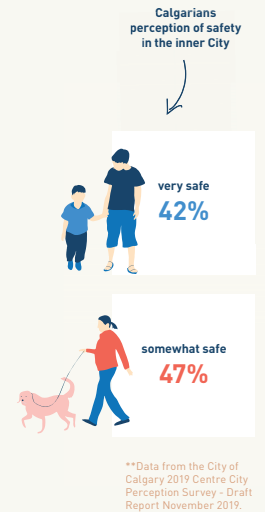
## Hunches



# Safety on Stephen Avenue

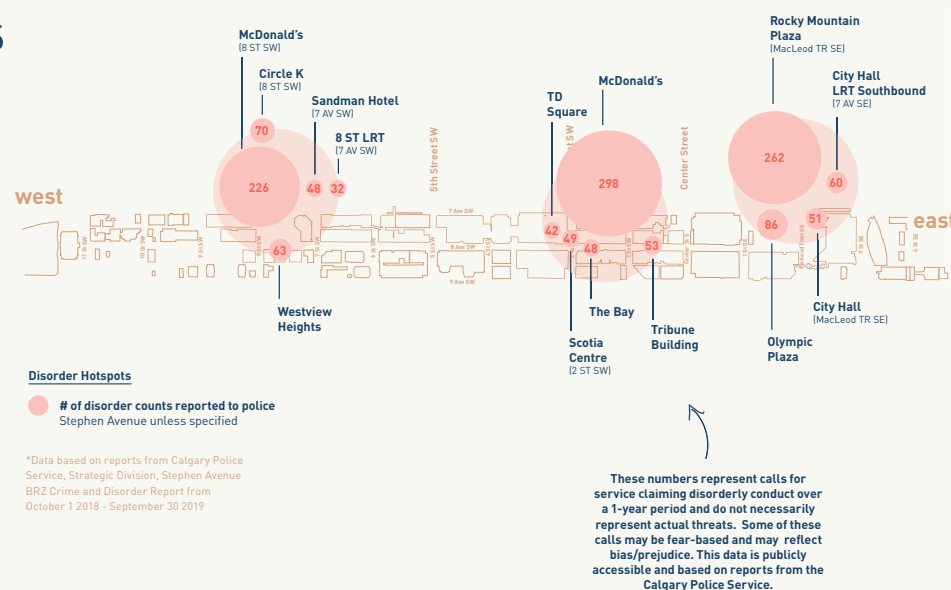
## → The perception of safety is declining in City Centre

The majority of Calgarians feel safe using all elements of the City Centre. However, the public perception around safety is worsening. In 2019 32% of Calgarians are likely to say that safety has worsened in the Centre City in comparison to 18% in 2017.



## → A few hotspots on and near Stephen Avenue influence the perception of safety

Public generated calls for service over the past year show several areas (hotspots) in and around Stephen Avenue that present social challenges with non-traditional crime statistics (i.e. events such as drunk, disturbance, indecent act).



## Trends

### Stewardship Programs improve service and sense of safety

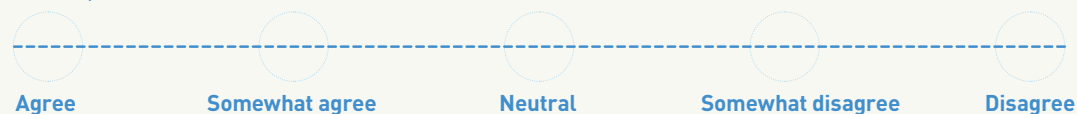
A strong framework for stewardship, operations and maintenance can play a central role in reinvesting in Stephen Avenue. Having a central entity that can take lead and connect across multiple agencies around governing a central public space, like Stephen Avenue, can be beneficial for both Stephen Avenue itself and the rest of downtown Calgary. While investing in expanding the Public Life Profile and bringing more people to Stephen Avenue at all hours can mitigate some of the more negative perceptions around certain hotspots, a hospitality program with street stewards can provide bodies and eyes on the street, that can act as a link between the public, city services and the governing entity of the street.

What do you think could be done to help improve the perception of safety on Stephen Avenue?



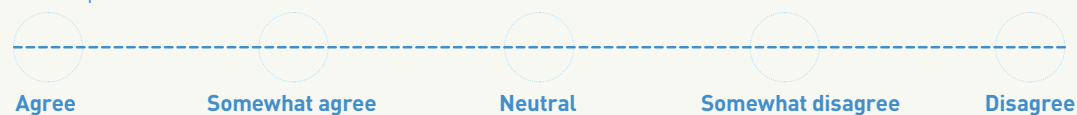
### I don't feel safe on Stephen Avenue.

Please place a sticker on the slider and fill in a card to tell us more.



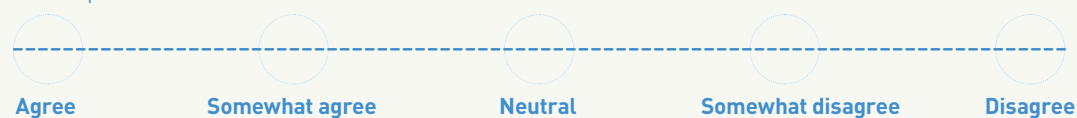
### I go to other places in the city for shopping + entertainment because I feel safer there than on Stephen Avenue.

Please place a sticker on the slider and fill in a card to tell us more.



### I feel the least safe on Stephen Avenue around the hotspots mapped above.

Please place a sticker on the slider and fill in a card to tell us more.

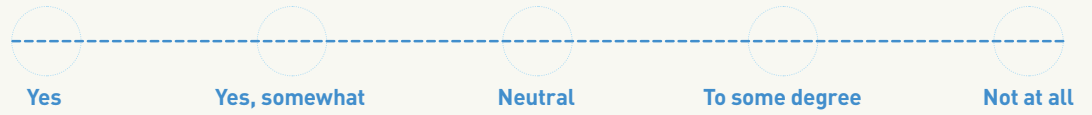


Downtown Santa Monica Inc., California ambassador program assists with: Visitor information and directions, visitors escorting upon request, recovering lost items, maintenance, call for services if needed, events and surveys.





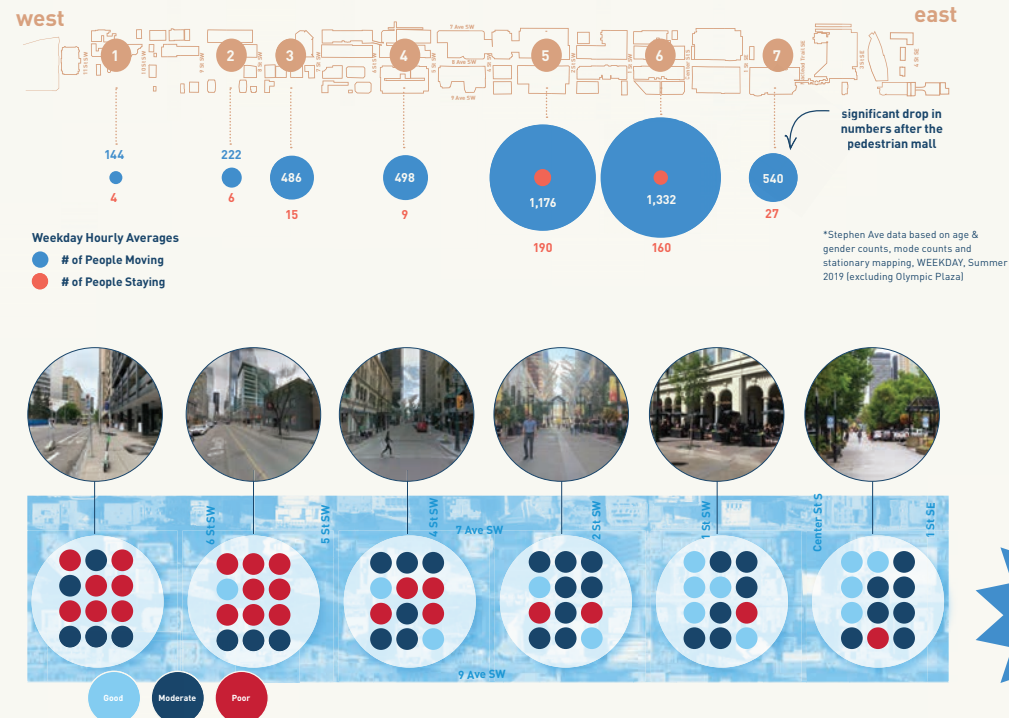
## Hunches



# Public Space on Stephen Avenue

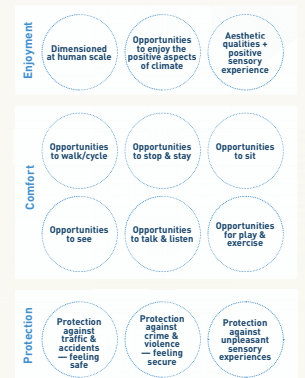
## → Public life follows the quality of the public realm

The number of people moving and staying increases from west to east, following the overall quality of the public realm. There are opportunities to invite more people to Stephen Avenue, especially towards the west end.



The 12 Quality Criteria is a tool developed by Gehl to assess the quality of public spaces. It follows the concept behind Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

### 12 Quality Criteria



## Trends

### Streets as Great Public Spaces

Great streets invite people of all ages and abilities to move freely and bring us closer together. They are free of fear and provide safe interactions between all modes of transportation, keeping the more vulnerable users at the centre of decision making. Great streets are places of community and connection. They are places that invite us to meet, socialize and interact. While streets are the connective tissue of our cities, they also make up the majority of our public realm and as such must be treated as public spaces not just as places of transition.

In North America, NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) estimates that approximately 80% of the public space in our cities are streets. As such they should be treated as public spaces in the same way as parks and plazas. But most streets are designed and operated for speed and efficiency for vehicles and fail to prioritize people walking and on bikes. As the downtown main street, Stephen Avenue holds the potential to become a Great Street, that through clear design cues prioritize people walking and on bikes and invites people to spend time.

Following the redesign of Brighton New Road, the number of people who spent time increased by 600%.

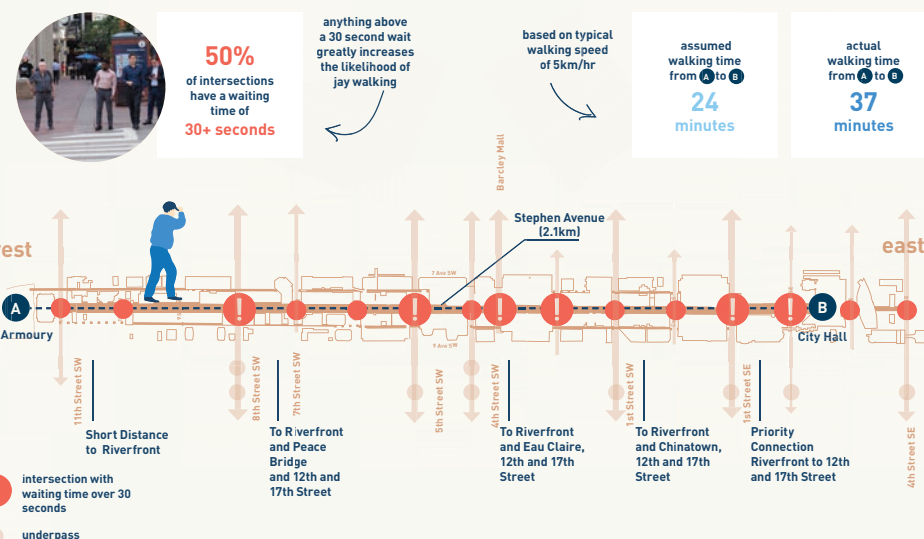
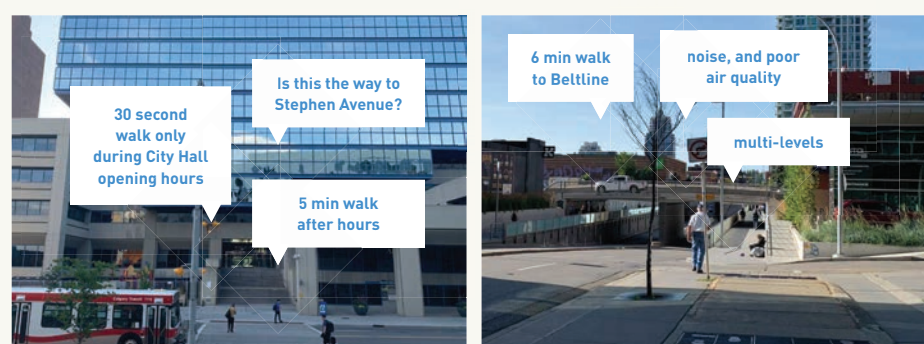
## → Inconsistent surfaces & spaces impede universal accessibility

There is an opportunity to create a more comfortable public realm for people with disabilities.



## → There are significant perceived and real distances on Stephen Ave

There's an opportunity to improve connections and reduce the mental distance along and between Stephen Avenue and other downtown destinations.





Hunches

# Let us know your thoughts!

→ Please fill in a card and post it on the board





# Programs

Put stickers on  
your **FAVOURITE**  
EXPERIENCES!

## Play



## Recreation



## Entertainment



## Winter Activation



## Outdoor Dining / Fast Casual



## New Types of Retail





# Spatial Characteristics

Put stickers on  
your **FAVOURITE**  
**DESIGN ELEMENTS!**

## Street Treatment



## Intersections



## Pavilions



## Seating & Shelter



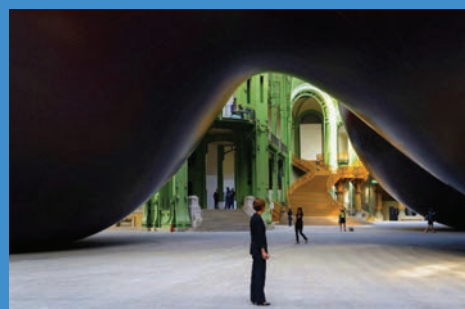
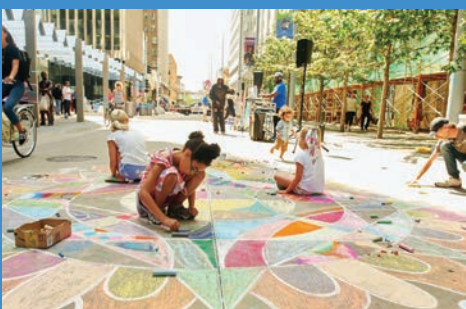
## Trees / Greening / Water



## Lighting



## Public Art





# Any other favourites?

→ Please write your thoughts on a sticky note and post it on the board

