

Calgary



The City of Calgary's

Winter City Strategy

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Table of contents

Land Acknowledgment	2
Executive Summary	3
Winter in Calgary	5
Why a Winter City Strategy?	6
Vision	9
Winter City Strategy	16
Implementation	25
Appendix 1 – Strategic Alignment	28
Appendix 2 – Citizen Survey Findings	31
Appendix 3 – Acknowledgements	32



The City of Calgary's

Winter City Strategy





We would like to acknowledge that this project is located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta. This includes: the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai, collectively known as the Blackfoot Confederacy; the Îethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. We acknowledge all Indigenous urban Calgarians, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, who have made Calgary their home.



Executive Summary

Calgary's Winter City Strategy will increase opportunities for Calgarians and businesses to embrace winter by creating and promoting unique winter experiences and activities that foster social vibrancy and equity, improve accessibility, and diversify economic activity.

The strategy recognizes, promotes, and celebrates all that Calgary offers in the winter. It captures the potential to winterize the city's places, and spaces, identifying ways to create more economic, social, and cultural opportunities for residents, visitors, and businesses during the city's winter months. This includes extending the city's festival and event season and encouraging a broader year-round approach to providing programs and services city-wide.

The winter season is 40 per cent of the calendar year in Calgary making it a growth opportunity for residents, visitors, and businesses. This unique environment can be leveraged to grow Calgary's outdoor economy, and experiential culture by allowing for more seasonal diversification of social, recreational, and business activities. Through targeted investments in infrastructure, and outdoor activations, Calgary's Winter City Strategy enhances the city's identity, making it a vibrant place for residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors year-round.

The strategy primarily addresses festivals and events, outdoor business activities, and outdoor-focused programming and initiatives during the winter months (November – March). The strategy’s framework includes guiding principles, a vision for Calgary’s future, four desired outcomes (pillars), 12 strategic goals and 35 actions.

Strategy vision

Calgary is celebrated as a world-renowned winter city

Implemented through a dedicated approach, the strategy capitalizes on the benefits that winter can offer; harnessing winter as an asset to create social and economic benefit.



The Winter City Strategy is based on five guiding principles that collectively inform the pillars and corresponding actions.

Guiding Principles:

1. **Calgary's winters are unique** – celebrate what makes us different
2. **Calgary has a vibrant festival, event, sport and community gathering culture** – extend that into the winter months outside
3. **Improve accessibility and safety** – find unique ways to improve multi-modal transportation and general safety
4. **Reinforce the Greater Downtown Plan's mandate** – Downtown is the economic and cultural heart of Calgary, and when our downtown thrives, so does the rest of the city
5. **Join the North American movement** – of becoming a winter city

Pillars and goals

The strategy's road map is divided into four pillars: **Economic Diversification, Accessibility and Equity, Infrastructure and Design, and Calgary's Winter Story**. To establish Calgary as a renowned winter city, the strategy's pillars each houses three goals to be achieved by implementing 35 actions.



PILLAR 1. Economic Diversification:

Leverage our existing assets and arts and culture and sports sectors and invest in new initiatives to make Calgary a more prosperous, exciting, and welcoming place for Calgarians, businesses and visitors throughout the winter season.

GOAL 1: Support the development of outdoor winter activities and events

GOAL 2: Promote local, national, and international tourism value propositions of being a winter city

GOAL 3: Increase support for winter-focused opportunities for businesses



PILLAR 2. Accessibility and Equity:

Include all Calgarians, regardless of age, ability, socioeconomic status or sociocultural backgrounds by supporting initiatives to have compassion, reduce social isolation and increase physical activity during winter.

GOAL 4: Increase opportunities for all Calgarians to embrace winter

GOAL 5: Increase low-cost public access to winter activities and sites

GOAL 6: Reduce barriers to participation in winter activities



PILLAR 3. Infrastructure and Design:

Apply a winter lens to The City of Calgary's services, infrastructure, investment and business practices to make Calgary a vibrant place to live, work and play year-round.

GOAL 7: Apply a year-round lens to future design or use of public spaces

GOAL 8: Implement winter public realm improvements to increase comfort, beauty, and user-friendliness during winter

GOAL 9: Increase winter maintenance to support the ease and safety of all modes of transportation



PILLAR 4. Calgary's Winter Story:

Promote positive perceptions of wintertime in Calgary with our unique climate, location and beauty, activities, and economic opportunity to build on our strengths as a major tourist, winter-sport and festival and event city.

GOAL 10: Increase awareness of Calgary's history as a winter city

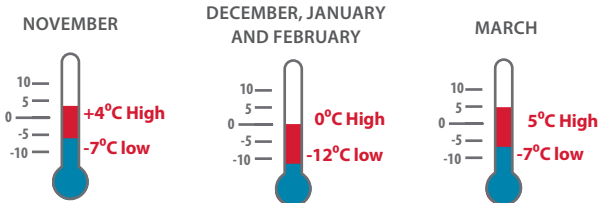
GOAL 11: Celebrate Calgary's unique winter weather and natural features

GOAL 12: Officially designate Calgary as a world-class winter city

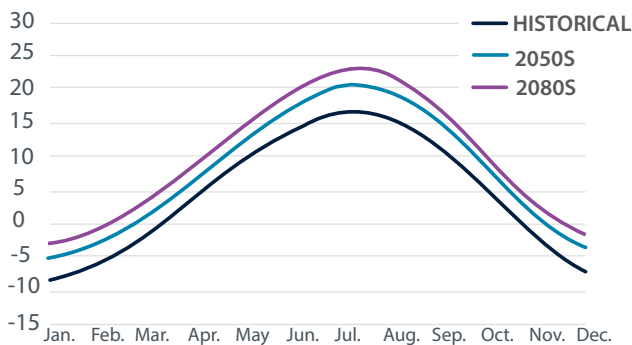
Winter in Calgary

Calgary, the third most populous city in Canada (Statistics Canada 2022), lies in the northern latitudes and experiences a cold and snowy winter season, technically from the winter solstice to the spring equinox, but realistically from the beginning of November to the end of March. The city can experience extreme cold snaps with temperatures lower than -25°C as well as periodic occurrences of above seasonal temperatures. Due to its proximity to the Canadian Rockies, Calgary has historically experienced a snowfall event in every single month of the calendar year.

A typical winter has average temperatures that have the following range:



Average monthly temperature $^{\circ}\text{C}$



Forecast modeling indicates that average monthly temperature ranges during the meteorological winter (December – February) will continue to increase due to climate change.

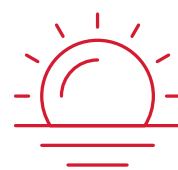
As Calgary's longest season, winter is often associated with the Chinook weather phenomenon, which occurs when a warm, and sudden wind blows from east to west, resulting in dramatic temperature swings which can range from sub-zero temperatures to spring-like weather conditions in the span of hours. The chinook winds cause air temperatures to increase dramatically, offering 20-30 spring like-days each season.

Calgary is one of the sunniest cities in Canada, with over 330 sunny days annually. Being situated in the Northern Hemisphere means its location tilts away from the sun in the winter season, causing less daylight and longer nights.

With Calgary having such winter weather temperature extremes, shorter sunny days and longer dark nights, adaptations and creative solutions are needed to support outdoor activities and businesses better and to expand people's perspectives on how winter can be embraced.

15-16hrs
of sunlight in
the Summer

Calgary's daylight hours
shorten to
just under
8hrs
by Winter Solstice (Dec 21)



Daylight
hours
increase
to over
12hrs
by the Spring
Equinox (March 2)



Chinook arc

Why a Winter City Strategy?

In 2018, Council approved the development of a Winter City Strategy. Council said ‘yes’ to creating a broader focus on how we work to make Calgary a great place to live, work and play in all four seasons. This allowed Administration the opportunity to consider how Calgary and other North American municipalities approach winter, the successes from those implementing strategies and the tools available to the city through established initiatives like the 8 80 Cities organization’s Wintermission project ([Wintermission: Bringing Public Life to Winter Cities - 8 80 Cities](#)). Common themes emerged including the potential for economic diversification, combating of social isolation, the ability to increase physical activity in the winter and the need to consider accessibility regardless of an individual’s age, ability, socioeconomic and sociocultural background. The value in exploring the opportunities of embracing winter were clearly achievable through The City, our communities and our partners.

In developing a strategy, The City also aspires to boost Calgary’s brand and increase our future attractiveness by being vibrant, connected and economically diversified year-round. A strategic approach to winter will create more seasonal activities to engage in, adapt our public spaces to work better in cold or snow and provide a safer and a more inclusive environment for Calgarians and visitors during the winter season.

In addition, the strategy also supports applying a winter lens to the network of diverse corporate plans and strategies which help make Calgary an active, inclusive and vibrant place.



“Year-round visitation is a critical part of our recovery plan and long-term success. Showcasing Calgary as a vibrant winter city supports our goal of attracting international visitors to Alberta and driving revenue for the province.”

Jon Mamela,
Chief Commercial Officer,
TRAVEL ALBERTA



Image provided by Tourism Calgary–Neil Zeller

Guiding principles

The Winter City Strategy capitalizes on the benefits that winter can offer; encourages new cultural activations, improves social vibrancy and equity, supports healthy lifestyles and creates community connections.

The approach to being a winter city is holistic by design. To become a winter city, the work must be collaboratively driven, embraced by businesses and supported by Council. Five guiding principles were inspired by Council's priorities, current-state analysis, and environmental scans of other winter cities and were tested with contributors and the public:



- 1 Calgary's winters are unique** – celebrate what makes us different
- 2 Calgary has a vibrant festival, event, sport and community gathering culture** – extend that into the winter months outside
- 3 Improve accessibility and safety** – find unique ways to improve multi-modal transportation and general safety
- 4 Reinforce the Greater Downtown Plan's mandate** – Downtown is the economic and cultural heart of Calgary, and when our downtown thrives, so does the rest of the city
- 5 Join the North American movement** – of becoming a winter city

To attract new Calgarians, provide value to existing community members and grow business opportunities, a year-round focus is essential to help make Calgary a great place to live, work and play. Being a winter city will add to Calgary's appeal and to achieve that future state, a vision statement was formed with input and agreement from contributors.

Vision

Calgary is celebrated as a world-renowned winter city

This ideal state is multi-dimensional because it is not just about how Calgary is regarded regionally, nationally, and internationally by businesses, visitors or future Calgarians, it is also about how resident Calgarians' feel about their city, throughout all the seasons.

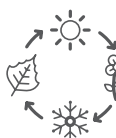
To achieve this vision, it must be built from the community level up by focusing on improving winter life for Calgarians first, all Calgarians, regardless of age, ability, income or background. If businesses and visitors see locals embracing and thriving in winter, they will seek opportunities to do it too.

The challenges

There is no denying that winter in Calgary can be uniquely challenging sometimes. The fluctuations between snow, below-freezing temperatures, sunshine and periodic warm temperatures create freeze and thaw cycles that produce icy conditions on surfaces that can impede mobility and activity. Darkness, starting in the late afternoon, can decrease active participation and the feeling of safety when outdoors. Some months there is little snow or ice to support typical winter activities. Colder snaps can make it unsafe to be outdoors unless one knows how to dress properly and has fair access to winter outerwear and shelter. Looking to the future, climate modelling tells us Calgary's winters will not only be warmer but will be affected by more likely and/or severe climate change hazards such as:



Heavy snowfall: Damaging winter storms, heavy snow and blizzard conditions will continue to be hazards as core winter months remain below 0°C.



Shifting seasons: Winters are getting shorter, spring is arriving earlier, summers are longer and fall is arriving later.



Severe storms: Hail, high wind events and tornadoes are likely to occur more frequently and over more months of the year.



These dramatic environmental conditions, while unpredictable in length and timing, provide an opportunity to embrace a broad diversity of typical and atypical winter outdoor activities. And while Calgarians' perceptions about Calgary's weather may influence their desire to be more active outdoors, there are existing amenities and activities to support outdoor winter recreation, entertainment, and commerce. As of March 2022, Calgary's winter playground included:



160

Outdoor rinks



393kms

Bike lanes
(snow cleared)



2

Ice trails



1

Alberta
Provincial
Park



1

Ski /
snowboard hill



442kms

Pathways
(snow cleared)



5,255

City Parks



22

Toboggan hills
(City maintained)



7

Cross country
ski trails



95

Firepits



3

Outdoor
winter
markets



79

Outdoor events
(Nov.–March)





Image provided by Tourism Calgary–Neil Zeller

The opportunities

Winter offers unique opportunities to enjoy the outdoors that cannot be experienced in other climate zones. The winter season is 40 per cent of the calendar year in Calgary making it a growth opportunity for business, events and activity development. Calgary's unpredictable weather can be fun and rewarding if both people and spaces are prepared for it.

Fostering a sense of winter city spirit can connect Calgarians from across the city and people from across the world. Applying a winter lens to existing and new amenities can maximize the use and safety of public spaces year-round. Spotlighting how all Calgarians can live better in winter helps demonstrate potential avenues for future investment, collaboration, and partnerships.

These opportunities can support economic diversification and tourism expansion while at the same time reducing the

negative effects of social isolation and lower physical activity during winter. For example, The City will typically support 15 outdoor events hosted in parks, pathways and roadways during the five months of winter compared to over 180 during the seven months of spring, summer and fall seasons. Knowing that events supply economic activity, with under 8 per cent of local events occurring outside in winter, there is a significant gap to explore to help drive the expansion of seasonal use of public places to increase economic benefits to the city.



Chinook blast Image provided by Tourism Calgary – Kelly Hofer

Ask, listen, test and inform

Over two years, a diverse group of contributors participated in the development of this strategy, ensuring a comprehensive review of Calgary's current status and future aspirations. Through workshops, surveys and interviews, contributors and Calgarians identified issues, opportunities and provided ideas to support Calgary becoming a more intentional winter city. These conversations were supported by asset mapping, program evaluations, and comparative municipal research to determine how to proactively shift Calgary's current winter story.

Representatives from business units across The City of Calgary contributed information on current projects, strategies and policies and thoughts on how to better address winter from their service area perspectives. Representatives from civic partners, Business Improvement Areas and community, non-profit and cultural organizations provided a diverse range of feedback on what was already being achieved and what could possibly be done collaboratively, in the future.

Improvement opportunities:

When doing outdoor activities, families with children need access to shelter and washrooms

To serve in colder weather, vendors need access to water and covered spaces



OWNING PROPER WINTER OUTERWEAR IS NOT A REALITY FOR ALL CALGARIANS



Ice on sidewalks and pathways is a major deterrent for many to stay active in winter



Lack of events and activities offered outdoors during winter as compared to summer





It was critical to have this wide range of participation to offer a 360-degree view of Calgary as a winter city from a myriad of viewpoints, revealing gaps in the city's current winter focused activities, business practices, levels of accessibility and winter-oriented infrastructure design and safety. This collaborative approach enabled internal and external contributors to identify ways to improve available winter activities, increase support for winter-focused businesses, address barriers to inclusion and accessibility, and improve participant comfort and safety through winterization of amenities and public realm improvements.

New ideas:



Support pop-up programming and winter patios for Chinook weather days



Hold a design competition for warming huts or covered shelters



Help increase the number of events and activities in neighbourhoods in addition to downtown



A dedicated marketing campaign to promote winter activities, destinations and events in more languages to interest more people

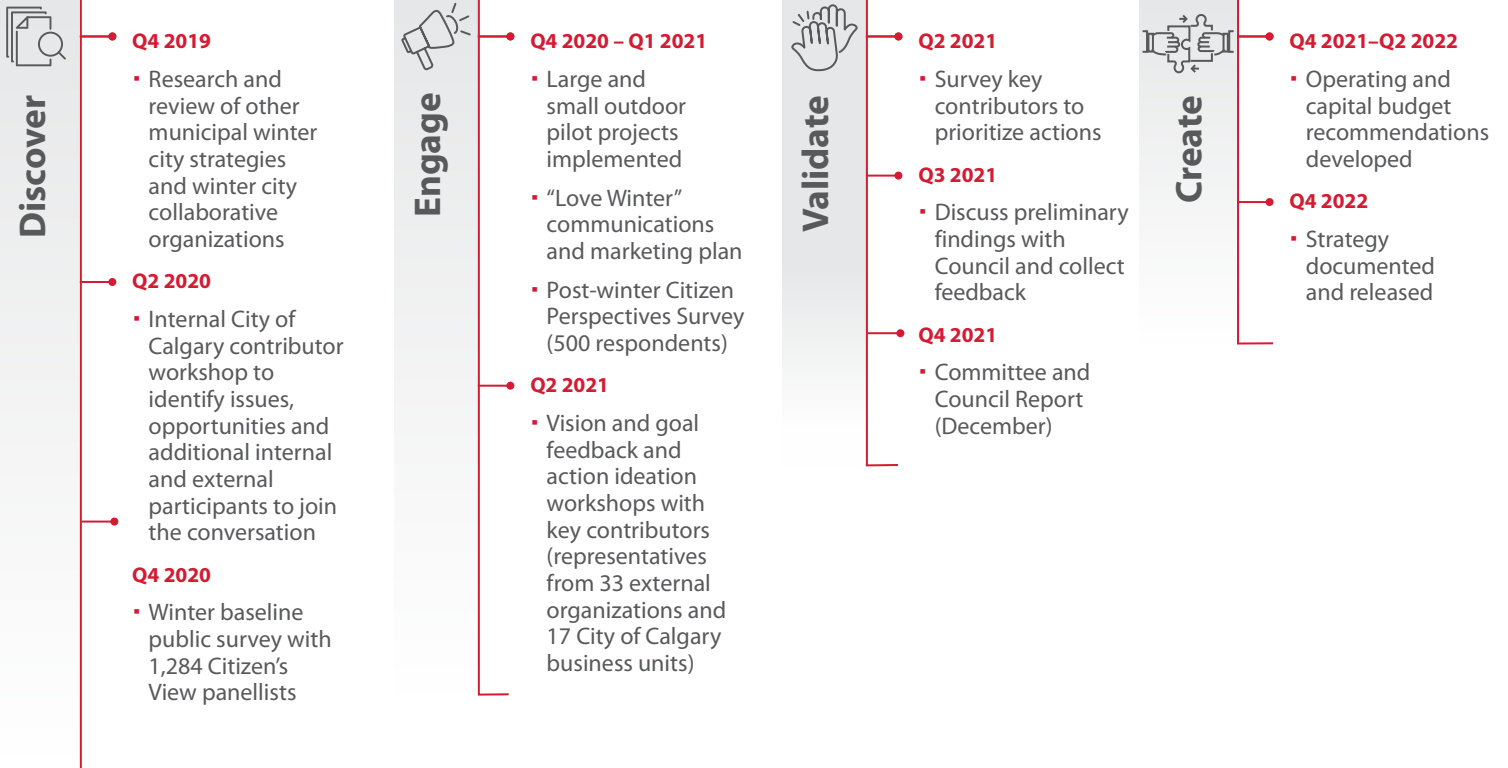


Install more seasonal lighting in the public realm to create beauty and safety in the evenings

Project timeline

Q4 2019

Q4 2022



The unexpected

In 2020, during the strategy development's engage phase, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions created the immediate opportunity to test pilot actions to address social isolation and support communities and businesses during the winter months. The success of the piloted actions confirmed the value of having a strategy to embrace winter as a time of activity and economic opportunity:



The 2021 'Love Winter' awareness campaign's social media plan generated positive comments about outdoor winter activities and initiatives from Calgarians across the city and delivered over 6.8 million impressions through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Chinook blast Image provided by Tourism Calgary – Neil Zeller



Federal and City investment in the inaugural 2021 Chinook Blast, Calgary's Midwinter Roundup festival, saw 390,000 people attend the free, three-weekend event employing over 120 artists and 50 businesses, resulting in an estimated economic impact of \$3.5M.

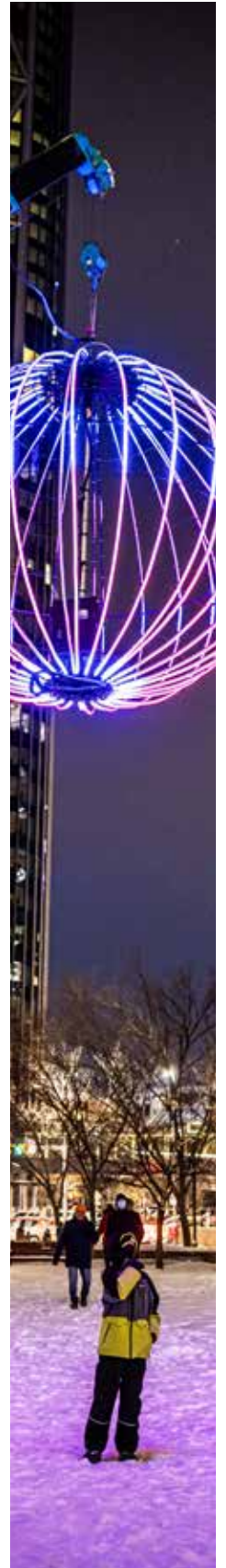


The 2020–2021 Embrace the Outdoors, a winter placemaking grant program delivered in partnership with the Calgary Parks Foundation, funded 29 local community projects that attracted over 32,000 attendees.



The 2020–2021 The City's Winter Firepit Program resulted in almost 2,400 free bookings for families or groups across 95 temporary and permanent firepits throughout the city.

Asking and listening to Calgarians and contributors, trying out new ideas and creating more awareness helped generate a new vision that Calgary can strive for and share across the city and the world.



Winter City Strategy

Pillars and goals

Using the guiding principles, reviews of comparable winter city strategies, public survey results and contributor consultation, the strategy's framework is packaged into four relatable pillars. Ideas, opportunities, and challenges, brought forward by participants, were categorized by theme, and then refined into a list of 12 goals.



PILLAR 1. Economic Diversification:

Leverage our existing assets and arts and culture and sports sectors and invest in new initiatives to make Calgary a more prosperous, exciting, and welcoming place for Calgarians, businesses and visitors throughout the winter season.

GOAL 1: Support the development of outdoor winter activities and events

GOAL 2: Promote local, national, and international tourism value propositions of being a winter city

GOAL 3: Increase support for winter-focused opportunities for businesses



PILLAR 2. Accessibility and Equity:

Include all Calgarians, regardless of age, ability, socioeconomic status or sociocultural backgrounds by supporting initiatives to have compassion, reduce social isolation and increase physical activity during winter.

GOAL 4: Increase opportunities for all Calgarians to embrace winter

GOAL 5: Increase low-cost public access to winter activities and sites

GOAL 6: Reduce barriers to participation in winter activities



PILLAR 3. Infrastructure and Design:

Apply a winter lens to The City of Calgary's services, infrastructure, investment and business practices to make Calgary a vibrant place to live, work and play year-round.

GOAL 7: Apply a year-round lens to future design or use of public spaces

GOAL 8: Implement winter public realm improvements to increase comfort, beauty, and user-friendliness during winter

GOAL 9: Increase winter maintenance to support the ease and safety of all modes of transportation



PILLAR 4. Calgary's Winter Story:

Promote positive perceptions of wintertime in Calgary with our unique climate, location and beauty, activities, and economic opportunity to build on our strengths as a major tourist, winter sport and festival and event city.

GOAL 10: Increase awareness of Calgary's history as a winter city

GOAL 11: Celebrate Calgary's unique winter weather and natural features

GOAL 12: Officially designate Calgary as a world-class winter city

Actions

The engagement phase of the Winter City Strategy's development included obtaining and testing ideas for actions to achieve the identified goals. Contributors rated each for its level of importance and ability to achieve the Strategy's goals. The results of the survey determined 35 actions to be implemented.

Economic Diversification



To build on what Calgary already does well in other seasons, new investment will support economic diversification with a focus on the development of more activities, coordinated marketing and promotion on what there is to do and demonstrate how The City encourages the involvement of community and business organizations.

GOALS	ACTIONS
GOAL 1: Support the development of outdoor winter activities and events	1. Invest in signature, winter-focused events that differentiate Calgary from other winter cities 2. Support Business Improvement Areas, community, cultural, arts and sports organizations to create and deliver more grassroots, community-driven winter experiences 3. Pre-approve pop-up event plans for implementation during Chinook weather 4. Support the development of winter experiences that can be done with or without snow or ice
GOAL 2: Promote local, national, and international tourism value propositions of being a winter city	5. Support the creation of a one-stop winter "information centre" for winter shopping, dining, art, sport, and event programs 6. Identify walkable and bikeable winter hub areas incorporating landmark locations, winter amenities and shopping/dining 7. Invest in cooperative marketing campaigns for both city-wide and community endeavours
GOAL 3: Increase support for winter-focused opportunities for businesses	8. Support outdoor guided experience vendors and Indigenous tourism sector initiatives to encourage exploring the city in unique ways 9. Support outdoor winter dining and shopping businesses by offering public space for temporary vendors, markets, and winter patios



"Focusing outdoor programming solely in the summer months is like trying to jam appetizers, main course and dessert into the cocktail hour. Calgary is a winter city. And people want to savour it in all seasons. All we need is something cool to do, the infrastructure to make it safe and comfortable to do at any temperature and a commitment to making it all accessible to all Calgarians and visitors. A winter city strategy is crucial to creating year-round vibrancy."

Camie Leard

Executive Director

CRESCENT HEIGHTS VILLAGE BIA
(Recipient of the 2021-2022 Warm up Grant)

Accessibility and Equity



To truly be a winter city, the strategy must be embraceable for all Calgarians and visitors alike. First-languages, cultural backgrounds, age, personal finances, medical challenges and different abilities can present barriers to all that winter has to offer. Investing in and evolving how The City, businesses and communities operate in winter will support an inclusive approach to being a winter city.

GOALS	ACTIONS
GOAL 4: Increase opportunities for all Calgarians to embrace winter	10. Create an interactive, multi-language, map of spaces and winter activity locations with ideas for what one can do in these spaces and how to get there 11. Support community and cultural associations to offer more free outdoor activities, winter sport lessons/rentals and outdoor comforts 12. Increase support for cultural festivals that occur during winter
GOAL 5: Increase low-cost public access to winter activities and sites	13. Incentivize organizations to offer discounted or free passes to winter events and activities for low-income households and vulnerable populations 14. Support low-cost or free access to winter activities and events on weekends through parking exemptions and Calgary Transit initiatives 15. Support external organizations to provide free or low-cost transportation to outdoor activities and events for seniors and people with different abilities
GOAL 6: Reduce barriers to participation in winter activities	16. Support education initiatives for how to dress for winter, snow and ice safety, responsible winter recreation and human-wildlife interactions 17. Increase support of vulnerable populations during winter 18. Support the creation of, or invest in existing, initiatives to supply free winter outerwear and sports equipment for lower income households or newcomers

Infrastructure and Design



To make the built environment match the desire to be a better winter city, investing in winter-focused amenities, updating service delivery and involving Calgarians and businesses in basic winter practices is essential. These actions will require developing winter infrastructure and design considerations with a focus on adapting spaces and places for cold or snow, increasing winter comfort, safety and beauty and creating more opportunities for activation and use of public spaces all year round.

GOALS	ACTIONS
GOAL 7: Apply a year-round lens to future design or use of public spaces	19. Increase investment to offer more ice trails, snowshoe and cross-country tracks, rinks and hills in City parks and greenspaces 20. Incentivize businesses and coordinate City services to support greater downtown streetscape winterization upgrades and provide indoor washroom access to the public 21. Develop winter-friendly design guidelines for City planning and building/renovation construction 22. Invest in developing an environmentally sustainable downtown decorative lighting plan
GOAL 8: Implement winter public realm improvements to increase comfort, beauty, and user-friendliness during winter	23. Invest in permanent or moveable warming huts for high-use public parks or greenspaces 24. Invest in winter seating for parks and plazas 25. Invest in the winterization of amenities such as public washrooms, winter water lines and wind breaks 26. Increase investment into the firepit program to provide greater coverage of the city's greenspaces, parks and community association lands 27. Support the installation of permanent or temporary exterior animations (i.e. street level lighting, large LED screens, light art) to promote activities, wayfinding, and beautification during winter 28. Invest in an outdoor wayfinding system for citizens and visitors to more easily navigate the downtown between winter activity areas, the Plus 15 network, and surrounding BIAs
GOAL 9: Increase winter maintenance to support the ease and safety of all modes of transportation	29. Extend the adaptable roadway program for winter recreation on weekends 30. Incentivize Calgarians to actively participate in snow and ice control in their community 31. Increase pathway, bikeway and sidewalk snow and ice control to focus on human movement 32. Develop innovative solutions to the windrow problem on sidewalks and pathways 33. Develop innovative solutions to heat sidewalks and public plazas



" A winter strategy could encourage our outdoor rinks to come alive with other complementary activities like bonfires, music in the park, or a hot chocolate fest. The possibilities to turn our winter city into a year-round gathering place are endless –that is where the Winter Strategy will play a role."

Leslie Evans,
Executive Director
FEDERATION OF CALGARY COMMUNITIES



"In a post-pandemic world, economic diversification, a key outcome outlined in the Winter City Strategy, has never been more important. Creating winter programming and activities will facilitate new dialogue and action that differentiates Calgary from other cities, attracting international, national, and local conferences and business events to our venue and the businesses that surrounds us."

Kurby Court,
President & CEO
CALGARY TELUS CONVENTION CENTRE

Calgary's Winter Story



To explore what sets us apart from other winter cities, Calgarians, businesses and government should all promote Calgary's winter story with a focus on key messages to better describe our uniqueness as a winter city and craft a compelling narrative to share with the world.

GOALS	ACTIONS
GOAL 10: Increase awareness of Calgary's history as a winter city GOAL 11: Celebrate Calgary's unique winter weather and natural features	34. Promote Calgary's Winter Story with key messages that Calgary: • Has a unique Indigenous winter-life history • Is a diverse city with an array of cultural celebrations happening during winter • Has community members who embrace the outdoors to stay healthy and connected to nature and each other • Is a basecamp for world-class winter activities (skiing, snowboarding, ice climbing, skating, Nordic sports) and national and international amateur or professional winter sporting events • Is the sunniest city in Canada with about 330 sunny days annually • Has a unique winter climate with Chinooks delivering 20–30 spring-like days during meteorological winter • Has natural winter beauty with Canadian Rockies, snow-swept prairies, and bright, blue sky
GOAL 12: Officially designate Calgary as a world-class winter city	35. Promote Calgary as a winter destination with key messages that Calgary: • Has amenities including skiing, ice skating, snowshoeing, winter-biking, and winter walking • Has a year-round vibrant art, theatre, music, and sporting event scenes • Has a complex multi-modal transportation system with accessible transit, year-round cleared bike lanes and the most extensive urban pathway/bikeway network in North America • Is easily accessed through an international airport and Trans-Canada highway



"This strategy has triggered a foundational shift -- treating the outdoor park at TELUS Spark as part of the year-round science centre experience. It's a small switch with big impact. Having the term "winter city" to rally around was all it took!"

Mary Anne Moser,
CEO
TELUS Spark

Implementation

The Winter City Strategy was approved by City Council on December 20, 2021 (CD2021-1617). Certain actions can be implemented immediately by leveraging or re-focusing existing budgets and staff resources while other actions will require new base operating or capital funding in the short (winter 2022), medium (budget cycle 2023-2026) and long (ongoing) terms. Collaboration with internal and external contributors who contributed to the strategy's development, plus new partners, will be key in maintaining an on-going focus with this new strategic direction as well as incorporating the goals and guiding principles into strategies, plans and policies, where required.

Leveraging existing funding

Short-Term

In 2022, the Winter City Strategy will focus on actions that can be accomplished through existing budget allocations across The City.

As a cross-corporate strategy, City business units will look at existing budgets through a year-round lens. This new focus will identify quick wins such as business process changes and aligning of service mandates to ensure a winter focus is considered for policies, plans and investments.

Successful pilot projects conducted during the strategy's development will continue to be adopted by The City to become annual programs.

Reviewing and removing operational barriers will improve how The City supports businesses and programmers in booking public spaces; they can be nimbler in planning for winter, especially during Chinook weather events.

New investment – operating

Short-Term

Increasing financial support for grant opportunities to; enable major events and community activations in downtown Calgary and across the city in Business Improvement Areas and Community Associations; encourage more winter focused events and increase community, cultural, arts & culture, sport/recreation and winter tourism-based initiatives and experiences.

Medium to Long-Term

In the next budget cycle and beyond, an increase in operating budgets is required to grow the support for externally provided winter events, programming and placemaking as well as City-led outdoor activities, venues, and services.

Increased operating funding is necessary to implement marketing and advertising tactics; to develop and execute ongoing local, national and international winter city communications campaigns for winter city brand development and increasing awareness at home and abroad.

These investments will continue to create more opportunities for people to embrace winter and success will be measured by the increase in number of bookings for outdoor public spaces, the estimated attendance reported by event organizers and program operators and the traffic driven to supporting web site and social media platforms.

New investment – capital

Long-Term

An increase in capital funding will be needed to analyse existing winter design guidelines and create a priority list of infrastructure to be updated or adapted. Identifying seasonal lighting and light-art locations, purchase of assets for warming and seating and optimization of infrastructure and utilities for year-round use will increase illumination, warmth, safety and beauty to attract people to gather comfortably outdoors and provide the required utilities for businesses to cater to those citizens. Success will be measured by the increase in the number of public spaces enhanced for operation and user-friendliness during winter and public satisfaction survey and opinion polls.

Staff resourcing and collaborative partnerships

Short, Medium to Long-Term

Leveraging of existing funding and increases to operating or capital funding will be supported by dedicated staff resources to develop collaborative partnerships, coordinate the adoption of the strategy across The City, execute the implementation of actions, measure results and adjust the strategy as needed.

The development of internal and external partnerships will be integral in achieving the majority of the Strategy's goals. Cross-corporate cooperation and partnering with non-profit organizers and programmers, civic partners, community associations and Business Improvement Areas will identify opportunities to collaborate on ideas and funding sources to implement actions. This approach will amplify the vision and reach of the city-wide strategy.

To evolve Calgary's identity to include being a winter city, and to ensure an all encompassing approach to investment in programs and services, The City, with collaborative partners, will:

**BE MORE
INCLUSIVE
AND EQUITABLE**

Supply outdoor-focused programming and services **to promote individual and community well being**

Support outdoor business opportunities to increase economic activity





**Increase public and
visitor experiences
to enhance vibrancy**

Improve mobility
and public spaces
**to deliver
comfort and
safety**

Promote Calgary as a winter city
**to increase tourism as an
economic driver**

Appendix 1 – Strategic Alignment

This strategy was developed during the 2019–2022 budget cycle and was influenced by Council direction and Calgarians’ priorities from that time. Implementation will continue to evolve through the future budget cycles and Council directed priorities.

Council Alignment

2019–2022 (Excerpts)

CITIZEN PRIORITIES	COUNCIL DIRECTION
A Prosperous City	Calgary Economic Development identified six potential industries that will drive economic growth and spur job creation. These all require attention and nurturing. One of those growth industries, travel and tourism, needs to move to a new level with an enhanced focus on arts, culture, festivals, and winter activities. Accordingly, Calgary’s new economic strategy must include policies that will attract these growth industries to Calgary, support Calgary’s existing businesses, enhance support for entrepreneurs, and revitalize the city’s downtown core.
A City of Safe and Inspiring Neighbourhoods	Calgarians want neighbourhoods and public spaces that are safe, accessible and inclusive for all Calgarians, including seniors and the disabled. We need to engage Calgarians at the neighbourhood level in a way that encourages local community connections and active participation in civic life across all ages, cultures and stages of life.
A City That Moves	Council’s primary concern is with the safety of all Calgarians; therefore, all modes of transportation must be safe.
A Healthy and Green City	We must also develop strategies to create communities that support healthy lifestyles and interaction amongst residents (walkability, pedestrian, bike and public transit connections) to reduce and prevent social isolation.
A Well-Run City	We need to shift our understanding and focus from how services are delivered to why services are delivered. The City must work on improving the value of municipal services delivered by simplifying and streamlining processes and procedures, cutting red tape, eliminating service silos, and discontinuing those services that The City should not be providing. Beyond removing barriers, The City must move to a culture that actively promotes businesses.

2019–2022 (Excerpts)

FOCUS AREAS	COUNCIL DIRECTION
Downtown Revitalization	Calgary's downtown is more than the heart of our economy, it is a source of pride, a symbol of our city and a gathering place for cultural activities, festivals and entertainment options, for Calgarians and visitors alike. When our downtown flourishes, our city succeeds. We will make it easier for all people to gather here: to work, to visit, and to experience all that our city has to offer.
Social Equity	Reducing inequity will deliver a better quality of life for all Calgarians.
Transit	We need to improve our Always Available for All Ages and Abilities (SA) infrastructure to provide safe, accessible, affordable, year-round options for transportation for all types of travellers. Transit contributes to social equity and is an important part of our downtown revitalization.
Hosting and hospitality	Calgary must stand out to attract new investment and new Calgarians. Hosting major events and promoting local ones demonstrates we are a destination of choice. This attracts further events, building culture and vibrancy. If we are to revive our hotel and tourism industries and build our cultural ones, we need to commit to more activity. Calgary has many significant events such as winter World Cup sporting competitions, the Calgary Stampede, Folk Festival, Chinook Blast and many other community festivals. We will continue to build on these events to spark success in the future. By seeking major events, Council signals a commitment to related industries. Major events will be an integral part of achieving the Downtown Revitalization Plan, and updating Calgary's brand on the international stage. More international exposure increases Calgary's competitive edge.
Global positioning and reputation	How is Calgary seen and understood at home and abroad? With one of the most diverse populations in Canada and changing values around climate, fossil fuels and a shift to clean tech and renewable energy, The City must work with its brand ambassadors and promotional agencies to refocus and promote our brand. Currently, Calgary's brand is of a successful city, based primarily on access to natural resources, including agriculture and energy. We are a city which values and celebrates our culture, heritage and diversity and the values we share. We value opportunity, talent attraction and retention, and our actions show we value each other. Our brand in the future must connect who we are as Calgarians with the land we occupy. The land at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers has long been inhabited by Indigenous peoples and has served as a gathering place. We will work to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners and continue to welcome newcomers, working together to achieve great things. These are the values that are woven into the fabric of Calgary's identity. A rebranding will help us communicate these values outwardly to the world.

Corporate Alignment



PLANS, POLICIES & STRATEGIES	PILLAR 1 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION	PILLAR 2 ACCESSIBILITY & EQUITY	PILLAR 3 INFRASTRUCTURE & DESIGN	PILLAR 4 CALGARY'S WINTER STORY
Imagine Calgary	✓	✓	✓	✓
Municipal Development Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Calgary Transportation Plan		✓	✓	
Imagine Parks		✓	✓	✓
Sport for Life Policy		✓	✓	
Festivals & Events Policy	✓	✓		✓
Greater Downtown Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eventful City Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy		✓		
Mental Health and Addictions Strategy		✓		
Calgary's Culture Plan	✓	✓		✓
Social Wellbeing Policy		✓		✓
Centre City Plan	✓		✓	

Appendix 2 – Citizen Survey Findings

December 2020 Citizen's View Panel Survey Key Findings Excerpts

Participation levels vary widely for types of outdoor winter activities, with walking or running being the only activity that more than half of respondents said they do often. Two thirds of respondents said they attend outdoor light or art displays sometimes or often. All other activities had far lower participation levels, with half or more of respondents saying they do them rarely or never.

Warming huts or heat lamps, free or discounted parking, access to food and drinks, winterized washrooms, and more snow clearing would make about half of respondents more likely to participate in outdoor winter activities. One quarter would be more likely to participate if there were equipment rentals, covered seating, and more lighting.

Regarding the cost of events and activities, free events and amenities are preferred in general but about three quarters of respondents said they are willing to pay to attend or access events, performances, sport facilities and recreation amenities.

March 2021 Citizen's Perspectives Survey Key Findings Excerpts



74% of respondents said they often or sometimes participate in outdoor winter activities in a typical winter



91% of respondents said it is important for The City of Calgary to offer Programs help Calgarians have safe outdoor fun



Suggestions for making Calgary a better winter city include **more snow and ice clearing on sidewalks/pathways, more affordable or free activities, and more marketing and advertising**



89% of respondents said it is important for The City of Calgary to offer events and performances that are **FREE TO ATTEND**



Households with a senior as well as households with a person who has a disability are more likely to say that more affordable or free activities would make Calgary a better winter city



Appendix 3 – Acknowledgements

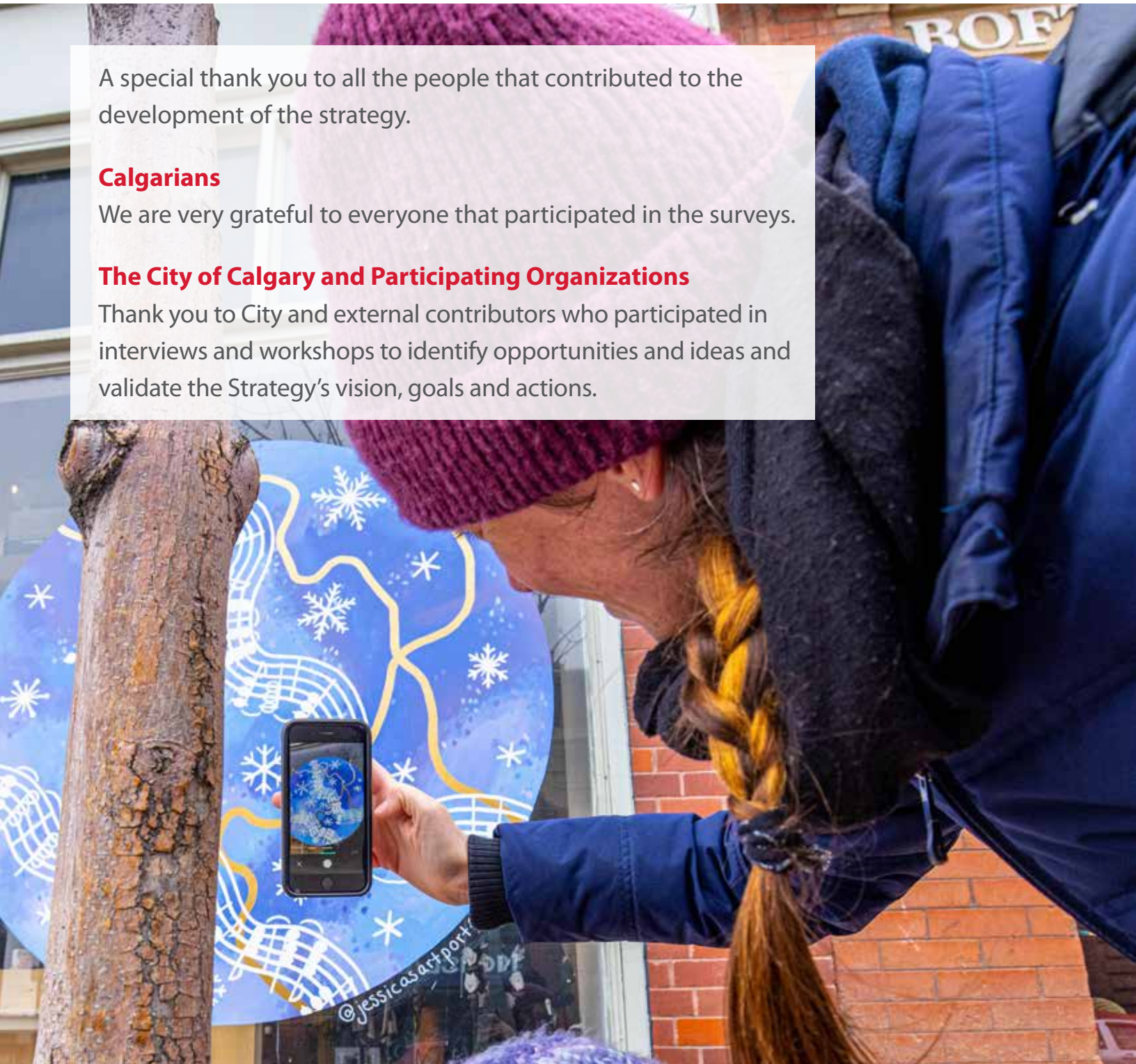
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Calgarians

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The City of Calgary and Participating Organizations

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Image provided by Tourism Calgary – Neil Zeller

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