



“People really get that a great city needs all of us.”



Three things

For thousands of years, people have met at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers to imagine and realize their futures. Building a great city takes the hearts and efforts of multiple organizations, governments, communities, and citizens. **Citizen participation** in shaping their city is critical and everyone has a role to play. That, according to Mayor Nenshi, is simple, yet one of the most profound shifts in urban governance that Calgary has seen in the last 10 years.

Before he became Mayor of Calgary, Naheed Nenshi was a member of the imagineCALGARY Roundtable. Together with other community volunteers, he developed the vision statement for imagineCALGARY that generated the momentum towards building a better future for Calgary—a great place to make a living, a great place to make a life. That future was one in which individuals and communities participate in decisions that affect their well-being. “We knew that people wanted to get involved in making this a great city – all we needed to do was ask them” says Mayor Nenshi.

Shortly after he was elected in 2010, Mayor Nenshi asked a group of dedicated volunteers to find a way to tap into Calgarians’ desire to **engage** in their communities and to inspire habits of service and volunteerism. From this group, 3 Things for Calgary was born—asking Calgarians to do at least three acts of service (big or small) and to encourage others to do the same. “We have heard so many great **stories** of people helping out and making a difference,” says Mayor Nenshi. “From the team who made quilts after the flood, to the family

who drops off toothbrushes at the hospital every night – people really get that a great city needs all of us.”

Engaging the community in decision-making is something The City of Calgary takes to heart. “Having real **authentic conversations** with Calgarians is really important to us,” says Mayor Nenshi. “We aren’t always perfect at it, but it’s so important. This is your city, and you should have your say.” This invitation to the public to participate in municipal governance has been a force in Mayor Nenshi’s drive to change how government is done. “Our participatory budgeting process is one great example of this. We asked Calgarians: ‘How do you want us to spend your money?’ Well, they told us, and we listened.”

During the imagineCALGARY community engagement process, Calgarians envisioned a city where things such as language, age, race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, time, finances, ability, knowledge, and health are not barriers to participation, but rather, seen as integral to being a resilient community fabric. “I’ve never been prouder to be a Calgarian as I have over this last year as we’ve worked to integrate Syrian refugees into our communities” says Mayor Nenshi. “When people need a hand, we step up. It’s the Calgary way. It reminds you that you live in a community where somebody cares about you.”

There are three things every Calgarian should know: We’re all in this together, this is our city, and everyone has a contribution to make. Together, we are building a city of energy, born of a powerful convergence of people, ideas, and place. With purpose, drive, and passion, Calgary is becoming a **model city** - one that looks after the needs of today’s citizens and those to come.

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