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Groundbreaking for Arts Commons Transformation expansion sets the stage for early January 2025 construction start

Project partners prepare to build first phase of largest cultural infrastructure project underway in Canada

December 11, 2024 – CALGARY, AB – After three years of meticulous planning and design, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), Arts Commons and The City of Calgary are thrilled to break ground on the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) expansion, marking a significant step forward in the delivery of the largest arts-focused infrastructure project currently underway in Canada.

“Since revealing the architectural designs for the ACT expansion in April, CMLC, as Development Manager for the ACT project, has been working with our construction and project management teams to develop a strategic and efficient construction management plan for the project, and to secure approval for our Development Permit this fall,” said Kate Thompson, President and CEO of CMLC. “A groundbreaking is an exciting moment in any project – it represents the culmination of years of advocacy, design, approvals and planning, and marks the beginning of really bringing a project to life. We can’t wait for the ACT expansion to begin to take its place in Calgary’s iconic skyline.”

Construction on the ACT expansion – designed by KPMB Architects, Hindle Architects and Tawaw Architecture Collective – will begin in January 2025. Construction will be managed by EllisDon with project management by Colliers Project Leaders, and is expected to be completed in 2028.

The ACT expansion is the first of the three campus transformation phases to begin construction. The other two phases include the Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) project – which is now fully funded – and the ACT modernization, for which efforts are underway to secure the remaining required funds.

“To finally be able to break ground on this once-in-a-lifetime project, with such an unprecedented level of public and private support, sends a strong message to the world about the importance of arts and culture to a city’s well-being, as well as to Calgary’s position on the global stage,” said Alex Sarian, President and CEO of Arts Commons. “Earlier this year we were humbled to announce both the Government of Alberta’s \$103M commitment, and Dave Werklund and family’s record-setting \$75M transformational gift which, combined with the \$320.5M of already secured funding, brings us to over 75% of our fundraising goal for this \$660M downtown cultural campus. As we prepare to unveil our rebranding to Werklund Centre in 2025, I am overwhelmed by the sense of optimism that comes from building the future of our city together.”

“My family and I are honoured to support Arts Commons and its city-changing transformation,” said Dave Werklund. “As long-time supporters of our city and of the arts, we know how impactful this organization and this project will be for Calgary today and for years to come. We are delighted to mark this milestone together today, and know that this is another important step of many in bringing this bold vision for our city’s arts and culture sector to fruition.”

“The arts are undeniably important to Calgary’s identity as a dynamic and evolving city,” said Premier Danielle Smith. “Alberta’s visual and applied arts and live performance industries are significant contributors to our economy. They support the local tourism and hospitality sector and sustain tens of

thousands of jobs every year. We're proud to be investing partners in Calgary's thriving arts and culture scene and in vibrant communities."

"Investing in our world-class performing arts centre will create a beacon for Calgary's downtown and encourage further private sector investment in our city's core," said Mayor Jyoti Gondek. "This is the kind of project that shows the world how exceptional Calgary-made architecture and cultural experiences have become through collaborations like this one between CMLC, Arts Commons and The City of Calgary."

Design is underway for the Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) project, which will create a more modern, inclusive and accessible arts-focused outdoor gathering space as part of the contiguous Arts Commons campus upon its completion in 2028. The design for the Olympic Plaza Transformation project will be revealed in late Q1 2025.

"The project partners and design team are hard at work on the design for the OPT project, coordinating with the ACT expansion design team to ensure seamless integration of the two adjacent projects and incorporating the feedback we heard from more than 3,000 Calgarians and event organizers through our public engagement in early 2024," continued Thompson. "Our ambition for the OPT project is to ensure that the aging plaza is revitalized so that it can continue to be enjoyed by future generations of Calgarians, as it has been for more than 35 years. We've heard from Calgarians that it is important that the plaza's Olympic legacy is reflected in the new space and we are exploring how that legacy will be thematically represented in the new plaza's design, and we look forward to sharing that design with Calgarians in 2025."

Additionally, CMLC and The City of Calgary have launched a series of digital experiences to archive Olympic Plaza's 1988-2024 chapter, including the Olympic Brick Finder, the Olympic Plaza Interactive Experience and the Olympic Plaza 3D Perspective. All three tools can be found at maps.calgary.ca/OlympicPlazaDigitalArchive

To facilitate construction of both the ACT expansion and the OPT project, Olympic Plaza will close at the beginning of January 2025, and site fencing will be installed around the entirety of Olympic Plaza at that time before beginning site demolition. 8 Avenue between Macleod Trail and 1 St S.E. will remain open for the majority of construction, and access to the existing Arts Commons facility, the Burns Building, the Public Building and the Dominion Bank Building will be maintained at all times.

The City of Calgary will continue to work with event organizers to identify alternate locations for events during construction. The City of Calgary has also launched a resource at calgary.ca/parks/olympic-plaza to help Calgarians find other parks, public washroom and skating amenities in downtown through construction.

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About CMLC

Created and owned by The City of Calgary, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) exists to achieve The City's objectives for urban densification and community renewal, infrastructure investment and placemaking. An entrepreneurial group of hands-on doers and placemakers, CMLC's approach is rooted in community participation and designed to strengthen the connections between places, experiences and people. As the master developer behind Calgary's East Village and The Culture + Entertainment District, CMLC is leading over \$1 billion in city-building projects and is the project lead on pillar projects in Calgary including the Arts Commons Transformation, Olympic Plaza Transformation, BMO Centre Expansion and 17th Avenue SE Extension and Victoria Park/Stampede LRT Station Rebuild. calgarymlc.ca

About Arts Commons

Arts Commons is the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada and third-largest performing arts centre in the country, located in the heart of downtown Calgary. For over 35 years, it has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians. It is home to six resident companies, including Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary. It houses six gallery spaces, five theatres, and the Jack Singer Concert Hall, and promotes local, national, international, emerging, and established artists with a focus on inclusion, diversity, accessibility, and equity. artscommons.ca