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OLYMPIC PLAZA TRANSFORMATION SET TO BEGIN

CMLC to manage Olympic Plaza Transformation—a city-building endeavour to restore a Calgary cultural landmark as a seamless extension of Arts Commons

June 6, 2023 – Calgary, AB – Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) and its partners, The City of Calgary and Arts Commons, are thrilled to announce the Olympic Plaza Transformation—a new city-building initiative to renew an important but aging downtown cultural space, amplify the potential of the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) and foster continued revitalization of the downtown core.

The Olympic Plaza Transformation will see a full redesign of the plaza as an innovative, flexible and active space in the downtown core. Its proximity to Arts Commons—currently undergoing its own \$480M transformation—will allow for design synergies, construction efficiencies and coordinated leadership.

"The Olympic Plaza Transformation project clearly illustrates the renaissance that Calgary's downtown is poised to experience. This is what happens when a municipality, together with its partner organizations and the business community, believes and invests in itself," says Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek. "The City's \$425M investment in the Downtown Strategy is paying off both in terms of reciprocal private investment and global attention."

In its budget for 2023-2026, The City earmarked \$108M for downtown revitalization, including upgrades to Olympic Plaza and Stephen Avenue. \$40M has been allocated to the Olympic Plaza Transformation for project initiation, design team procurement and design development. Additional funding will be required prior to construction commencing on the project.

Olympic Plaza Transformation will proceed according to a development agreement between CMLC, The City of Calgary and Arts Commons that will now govern the delivery of both the Arts Commons Transformation and the Olympic Plaza Transformation. As development manager, CMLC is responsible for stewarding design and construction on behalf of its partners. CMLC will also manage the redevelopment of Stephen Avenue in this block.

"As development manager for the expansion and modernization of Arts Commons, CMLC is perfectly positioned to lead the Olympic Plaza Transformation with a coordinated approach that dramatically elevates the entire block," says Kate Thompson, CMLC's President & CEO. "CMLC excels at visionary master-planning, and the opportunity to reimagine an entire block is very exciting—as are the benefits and opportunities for Calgarians. Leading three adjacent and concurrent projects in this block creates construction efficiencies and economies of scale."

In the coming weeks, CMLC will issue a competitive RFP for a qualified and visionary design team. Following selection of the proponents, design is expected to take place through 2023 and 2024, in alignment with the design process for ACT.

“This project represents another major step forward in the continued progression of Calgary’s Downtown Strategy. Over the past two years, we’ve seen more than \$189M in private investment committed into the downtown and these types of major public space improvements are critical to creating a complete downtown experience,” says Thom Mahler, Director of The City of Calgary’s Downtown Strategy team. “Together with the investment in Calgary’s Culture + Entertainment District and the downtown core, we are charting a new future for Calgary’s downtown cultural, arts, and entertainment identity.”

In developing a programmatic design for the Olympic Plaza Transformation, CMLC and the selected design team will explore the plaza’s historic elements and significance as a gathering place during the 1988 Winter Olympics along with learnings from [The City of Calgary’s 2016 Olympic Plaza Cultural District engagement](#) and [CMLC’s 2021 Arts Commons Transformation public and stakeholder engagement](#). CMLC will provide additional opportunities for public input as the project progresses.

A key intent driving Olympic Plaza’s Transformation is a stronger connection, both physical and conceptual, with Arts Commons—one that fosters an organic flow between indoor and outdoor spaces through imaginative design and creative programming.

Given Olympic Plaza’s intimate connection to Arts Commons’ evolving campus and its perfect fit within the organization’s programming aspirations, the Arts Commons team will lead curated programming for the revitalized plaza after construction is complete. Arts Commons’ responsibilities will include programming, operating and maintaining the plaza.

“Overseeing the successful activation of Olympic Plaza allows Arts Commons to expand on our mandate of stewarding cultural assets in our city on behalf of the citizens of Calgary. Leveraging this outdoor community space to connect more artists to more audiences will create a more vibrant and resilient cultural presence in our downtown core,” says Alex Sarian, President & CEO of Arts Commons. “Envisioning Olympic Plaza as part of the new Arts Commons campus gives us so much more flexibility to deliver public and private outdoor events—a tremendous boon to our ambitions to diversify our programming and extending our reach.

“When Olympic Plaza and ACT are complete, the Arts Commons campus will be one of the largest contiguous arts-focused space in Canada. The potential for elevating Calgary’s reputation as an internationally important arts and cultural centre is tremendous,” adds Alex.

Construction timelines for the Olympic Plaza redevelopment will be defined as the project plan is refined. To facilitate construction on both the Arts Commons Transformation and Olympic Plaza Transformation projects, events and programming in Olympic Plaza will be paused at the end of 2024. The City will work with event coordinators to identify alternate locations.

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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 new 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, BMO Centre Expansion and the 17th Ave 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.

About The City of Calgary's Downtown Strategy

The City's Downtown Strategy is leveraging the collective efforts of The City and its public and private sector partners to respond to prolonged economic challenges, and capitalize on opportunities that will create jobs, drive economic recovery, and revitalize and transform Calgary's downtown. To learn more about our efforts to support downtown Calgary's roadmap to reinvention, visit Calgary.ca/Downtown