

Calgary



Downtown: 2024 Spring Focus Groups with Calgarians

Final Report

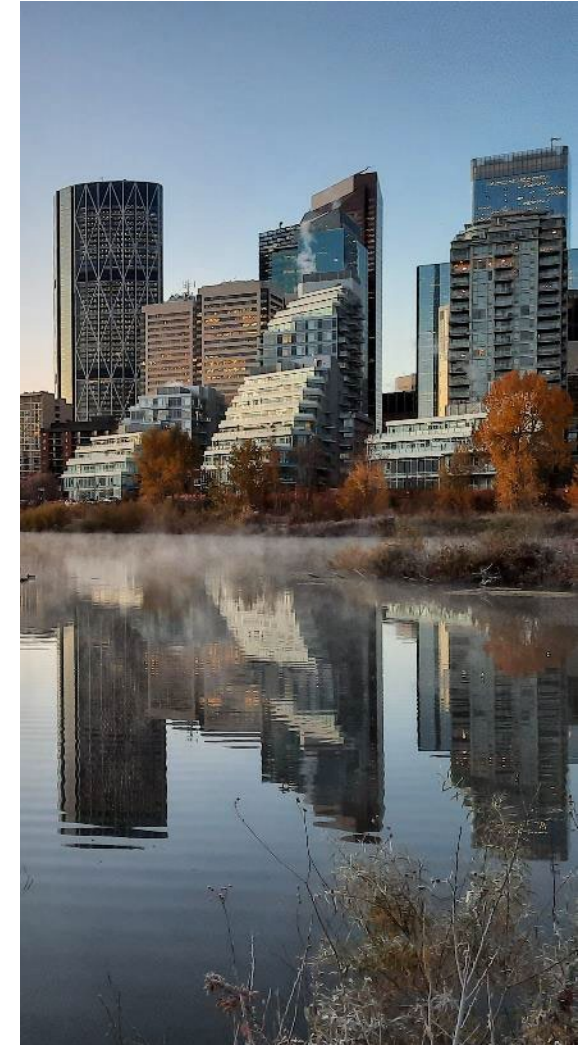
June 2024

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Project Overview

Overview of the study

Purpose

This report provides an overview of Calgarians' perspectives of Downtown that emerged from the Spring focus groups. Nine (9) ideas for events and activations in Calgary's City Centre were also presented to participants to understand their reactions and likelihood of participating or attending the events or installations.

Method

Six (6) in-person focus groups were held between May 27-29, 2024, with residents from all areas of the city. Groups were divided by life stage and one group was with downtown workers:

Date	Group #	Segment	# Participants
Mon. May 27	1	Seniors (55+)	8
	2	Families: with kids 12 & under	6
Tues. May 28	3	Youth (18-24)	7
	4	Families: with tweens/teens	8
Wed. May 29	5	Downtown Workers	8
	6	No Kids (Couples and Singles)	8

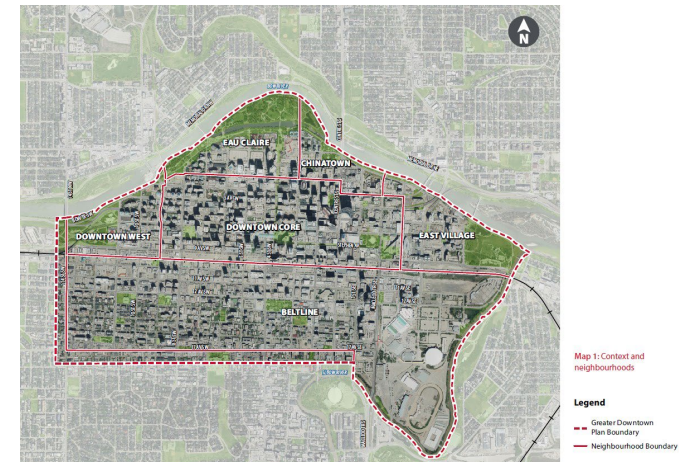
Discussions were 2-hours in length and held in the evenings (5:30-9:30 pm). Eight (8) participants were recruited for 6-8 to show for each session. A total of **45 Calgarians** participated in the research.

Note that those recruited had an inclination to go downtown, and those who would never go downtown were excluded from this research. Please see the Appendix for the breakdown of populations represented in this research.

The focus groups were hosted in person at a downtown facility (Stone-Olafson). City of Calgary representatives observed the sessions through a one-way mirror in the backroom, as well as remotely (live streamed by the facility). Participants received a \$100 honorarium for their time and participation.

Participants were asked to focus on downtown, as presented in the map below:

Calgary's Centre City or Downtown area which includes the communities of **Beltline** (including Connaught and Victoria Park), **Downtown Core**, **Chinatown**, **Downtown West**, **West End**, **East Village** and **Eau Claire**.





Executive Summary

Executive summary | High level overview

1

Visiting Downtown Calgary: Participants reported that they are more likely to visit downtown in the summer and on weekends (when free parking is available). Barriers to visiting downtown included safety, crime, open drug use, parking fees, and the homeless population. While reasons for visiting downtown varied depending on life stage and/or employment (i.e., working downtown), a consistent draw to downtown for participants is events in the core (e.g., Stampede, music, concerts, festivals, markets), the parks, and the river.

2

Perceptions of Downtown: Participants expressed feeling safest downtown during the day when more people are around. This was especially relevant for parents of kids and teens. Most groups felt that there are things that adjacent neighbourhoods offer that downtown does not, including accessibility (e.g., less traffic, more walkable), affordability (e.g., parking), and interesting attractions (e.g., shops, installations).

3

The City's Role in Testing Ideas: Participants overall felt it is The City's responsibility to test new and innovative ideas for events and public spaces. That said, expectations of The City varied depending on life stage and/or employment (i.e., working downtown). For example, Youth focused on The City's role in promoting events and downtown workers focused on safety.

4

Idea Testing: In order of most votes to least, participants ranked the downtown events and activations as follows: Lot 6 Activation, Alcove Centre for the Arts Development's Vacant Space Activation, Winter City Design Competition, Creative Wayfinding Mural, Century Gardens Basketball Event, Les Trompos, Glenbow at the Edison, Century Garden Basketball Courts, and, lastly, Lobbyfest. Consistently, participants appreciated events and activations that involved bringing the community together, fun, family-friendly, free, and revitalizing the city.

5

Sources of Information About The City: Participants primarily preferred to hear about events and activations in the downtown core via social media—mainly Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram.

Executive summary | Recommendations

1 **Improve Communication:** Across the sessions, there was a desire for more effective communications from The City about events, installations, and programming happening in Calgary, especially via social media.

2 **Bringing People Downtown:** Participants would visit downtown more often if there was improved safety and transit. Transit also being more affordable was suggested. More “activations” in the core (e.g., events, including free opportunities) would encourage visits. However, more “activations” may be missed unless they are coupled with improved communication from The City to Calgarians about available events, spaces, and programs. Thus, drawing back to recommendation #1, participants also requested increased awareness, communication, and information on happenings that will draw them downtown.

3 **Ideas with the Most “Traction”:** The City should consider pursuing the following top three ideas for downtown events and activations: the Lot 6 Activation, Alcove Centre for the Arts Development’s Vacant Space Activation (although participants suggested the name was a “mouthful”), and Winter City Design Competition.



Issues Agenda and Economy Perceptions

Setting the stage: What are Calgarians looking forward to this summer?

Apart from Seniors, someone in each group mentioned looking forward to Stampede. Youth were almost unanimous in their excitement and anticipation about this event. Festivals and concerts (a variety) and enjoying the outdoors – parks, pathways, patios and activities by or in the river – were also top mentions among participants.



Youth (18-24)

- Excited about Stampede!
- Concerts.
- Float down the Bow River.
- Patios.



No Kids

- Stampede.
- Festivals: Folk Fest; Music.
- Lilac Festival.
- Parks and pathways.
- Pubs (patios).
- Biking.
- International Film Festival.



Families: Kids <12

- Stampede.
- Festivals: music, Lilac, Salsa.
- Prince's Island Park (picnics).
- Olympic Park.
- Patios.
- Golfing.
- Splash pools.
- Zoo.



Downtown Workers

- Stampede.
- Festivals: music.
- Nature – walk, hike, bike, river.
- Stephen Avenue.
- Patios.
- Tennis.
- Eau Claire.



Families: Teens 13-18

- Stampede (associated corporate events).
- Walking trails and pathways.
- Comedy events.
- Patios.
- Baseball.
- Dragon Boat.
- Fish Creek.
- Explore the city.



Seniors

- Festivals: Lilac, Folk Fest.
- Parks (e.g., Bluffers Park).
- Pathways.
- Being outside.
- Camping.
- Get to know the city (now retired).
- Crafts.

Describe downtown Calgary

Q: Imagine you're taking a flight and the person sitting next to you asks you where you live. You say "Calgary". This person has never been to Calgary and doesn't know anything about it. What you would tell this passenger about **downtown Calgary**?



- “ If I were asked about fun downtown activities, the core shopping center is quite a unique mall with plenty of stores. Prince's Island Park is gorgeous in any season whether it be winter or summer. In summertime, there are lots of outdoor events such as music or plays in downtown Calgary as well as lots of interesting art to see. – **Youth**
- “ A gateway to the Rockies, Calgary is well organized with grids/street mapping. There's tons of amenities – shops, restaurants, attractions (Zoo, Calgary Tower, Stampede). Downtown is accessible by train with lots of parks and green space and pathways. There's also Street Festivals. – **Family with kids under 12**
- “ Accessible to get around – walking, CTrain, etc. It's often bright and sunny weather even in the winter. Multicultural, so lots of great diverse entertainment and dining options. Lots of green space that is well maintained like Prince's Island Park. – **Family with tweens/teens**
- “ Calgary doesn't always have a fantastic night scene, but it's getting better! Downtown is beautiful – it's on the river, easily walkable and has free CTrain use. The Glenbow Museum, National Music Center, The Globe Theater. Grab a drink at the Ship and Anchor, dinner at a local spot, on 17th or 8th Ave. and a river walk with baby geese!! – **No kids**
- “ You'll experience four seasons in one day! Make sure to visit Stephen Ave. and try some of the cool restos via patio dining. Go biking along the Bow River near Eau Claire, walk along the downtown area and experience Calgary history such as the Lougheed House. And there's Stampede, cultural festivals for different ethnicities – usually happens in July to September. – **Downtown Worker**
- “ Calgary is a vibrant fast-growing city of well over a million people. Full of cultural diversity and ethnically diverse communities. We are fortunate to have the largest connected pathway system in North America and a vibrant downtown. CTrain service accesses most of the city including free access in the core. There are many attractions from Stampede Park, cultural and historical buildings, parks, the Science Center and so many other attractions and great weather. – **Senior**

Perceptions of downtown Calgary

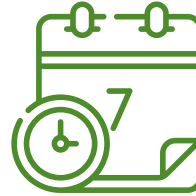
Perceptions of downtown are different depending on...



Time of Year

- The Calgarians we spoke with were far more likely to visit downtown during spring, summer or fall – particularly summer owing to all the festivals and Stampede taking place. They reported that it is more pleasant to walk around, explore or sit on a patio during this season.
- Winter is dark and cold, and downtown was perceived by participants as stark and unwelcoming during this time of year. It is also difficult to get folks to leave their homes when it is below zero or when roads need plowing. Skating at Olympic Park and Flames games were two prime reasons to visit.

“ There's so much going on in the spring summer and fall. In the winter you ought to take into account the crazy weather and commute. – **Senior**



Weekday vs. Weekend

- During the weekday, participants noted the vibe is more corporate and generally busy at lunchtime. However, things ‘die down’ after around 5:00 pm, i.e., “they roll up the sidewalks” or “it’s a Ghost Town”.
- “ The Beltline is where the evening activities are, with great restaurants. The real core of Calgary is a bit of a ghost town if it's not working hours. Everyone packs it in at 6:00pm. – **Family with kids under 12**
- It was felt that weekends are generally busier (mostly summer) with people going to Prince's Island Park, St. Patrick's Island, the Calgary Zoo, 17th Avenue, patios on Stephen Avenue Mall, or playing tour guide to visitors. Some mentioned free parking on the weekends and/or Sundays being a bonus.



Time of Day

- The majority said they feel safer downtown during the day and when there are a lot of people around. When it gets dark, the streets are quieter, and some areas were described as “deserted” or “sketch”.
- When others are around (i.e., at an event), people feel there is safety in numbers and more security is present.

“ I have a daughter who goes to Bow Valley College, so she's downtown during the daytime and I'm glad she's not downtown at night. Safety wise, I'd rather her be there during those rush hours where all the various working people are travelling on the CTrain. I like to know she's in a pack of folk, which makes me feel like she's safer than if she was just downtown with even say a couple girlfriends at night, which she does too. – **Family with tweens/teens**



Perceptions of downtown Calgary (continued)

Barriers to going downtown were spontaneously mentioned and included safety concerns and open drug use downtown and on transit, the homeless population, and the expense of parking. In planning the groups, it was acknowledged that The City is very aware of these barriers and exploring these barriers was outside of the scope of these sessions and sufficiently addressed in previously conducted research. As such, the moderator gently explained “I understand your concerns. I recently did focus groups with Calgarians regarding safety – and transit, so I would like to hear about things that would bring you downtown” to redirect the discussion.

On-going construction (roads and otherwise) and navigating one-way streets were reasons participants avoided downtown. It was also mentioned by participants that downtown Calgary is not fully accessible, i.e., for anyone who has mobility issues and/or uses a wheelchair or scooter.

Reasons for going downtown varied depending on life stage and/or employment (i.e., must go downtown to work). That said, many who work in the core reported enjoying what it has to offer, such as the selection of restaurants, ease of walking or exploring when on a break, etc. Reasons ranged from socializing to exploring, the environment, and attending events.

“ Stephen Ave.... there are boutiques, you can dine in a restaurant, it has a great urban energy. There's the Bow River, Prince's Island Park, can have a picnic and enjoy the scenery or rent a paddle boat. – **Downtown worker**

“ Downtown Calgary is a vibrant place with a lot to look at and do. The library, art, theatres (Storybook Theatre, Vertigo, Theatre Calgary), tons of shopping and places to adventure – like Devonian Gardens. – **Family with kids under 12**

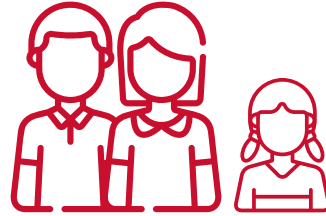
“ It's vibrant. It's rich with arts and music. – **No kids**

Perceptions of downtown Calgary (continued)



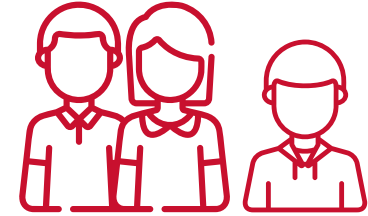
Youth (18-24)

- To party (e.g., clubs, bars), Happy Hours, meet friends, go on a date, and go to the gym.
- Music, concerts, Country Thunder.
- Art tours, music museum, new library, restaurants.
- Festivals (e.g., Sled Island Music & Arts Festival or Lilac Festival) and other events (e.g., markets like Inglewood Night Market, Beerfest).
- Stampede.



Families: Kids <12

- Date Night, a night out / nice dinner.
- The river, Prince's Island Park.
- Festivals, including Lilac Festival (top of mind – upcoming).
- Look at buildings and art.
- Lunch; Village Ice Cream.
- Library.
- Events: hockey, concerts, theatre.
- Calgary Tower.



Families: Teens 13-18

- Museum, Music Hall, Bell Center.
- Sports games (e.g., NHL) and sports areas (e.g., new baseball court park).
- Festivals (e.g., dog festival, Folk Festival, Lilac Festival) and other events (e.g., the night markets).
- Peace Bridge (unique architecture).
- Winterfest; Skating at Olympic Plaza.
- Stephen Avenue all lit up.
- Stampede.

Compared to people with no kids, downtown workers, and seniors, the above groups expressed having less time to visit downtown and that downtown was not really convenient for them to visit (e.g., parking, many places are closed). The above groups also noted more unease visiting downtown due to concerns surrounding safety and crime in the core. These concerns seemed to be especially heightened in relation to children.

This surfaced in the above groups expressing fewer reasons for visiting downtown than people with no kids, downtown workers, and seniors.

Perceptions of downtown Calgary (continued)



No Kids

- Music Fests, local music, Palomino.
- 17th Ave. and Stephen Ave. are “activated”.
- Globe Theater.
- The river, peace bridge, float on the river, Prince’s Island Park, Saint Patrick’s Island, pathways.
- Olympic Plaza, Library, Chinese Cultural Center, Chinatown, Eau Claire Market.
- Stampede Pancake Breakfasts.
- Comic Con parade.
- Rollerblade, walkability.
- Shopping.



Downtown Workers

- Mandated back to work 2-5 days a week.
- Music.
- Stampede.
- Things to do/see on breaks: Devonian Gardens, High Park, Library, Museums, Chinatown, Studio Bell.
- Free events and things to do at the Central Library.
- Peace Bridge, the river, Prince’s Island Park.
- The art scene: Arts Commons, Theatre Calgary, the orchestra.
- People watching.
- Value the environment: gardens, flowers, murals – ‘unique to Calgary’, walkability.
- Appreciation of diverse cultures with the various festivals, cuisines, etc.



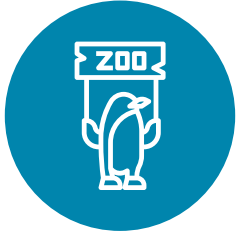
Seniors

- Shops.
- Culture offerings not found in communities (i.e., arts, theatre).
- Special events, concerts, festivals, live theatre, the lights at Christmas, International Film Festival.
- Explore and take photos:
 - The skyline, community art, buildings with murals, art walks, Ghost Walks, and farmers market near the library.
- Stampede Parade, Canada Day at Prince's Island and Olympic Plaza, Parade of Wonders on Stephen Ave.
- Plus 15 is awesome to get around (especially in winter).

Kids and teens' perceptions of downtown



Parents were asked what their kids' perceptions of downtown are. For those with younger kids (12 and under), their kids find it interesting, but scary at night. One parent's children attend Riverside school and go on walking field trips in downtown. Young kids also love the CTrain and buses and are fascinated by the tall buildings.



Some parents take their kids downtown once or twice a month and others every two to three months. Kids ask to go to the Zoo, Central Library, the river, Saint Patrick's Island, etc. Going to concerts and the theatre downtown makes them feel special.



For parents with tweens/teens, their kids enjoy going downtown for the Stampede, hockey games with friends, to walk or bike along the river, and the skate park. The Library, Saint Patrick's Island the basketball courts are also destinations for them. Going on a CTrain is considered an adventure.



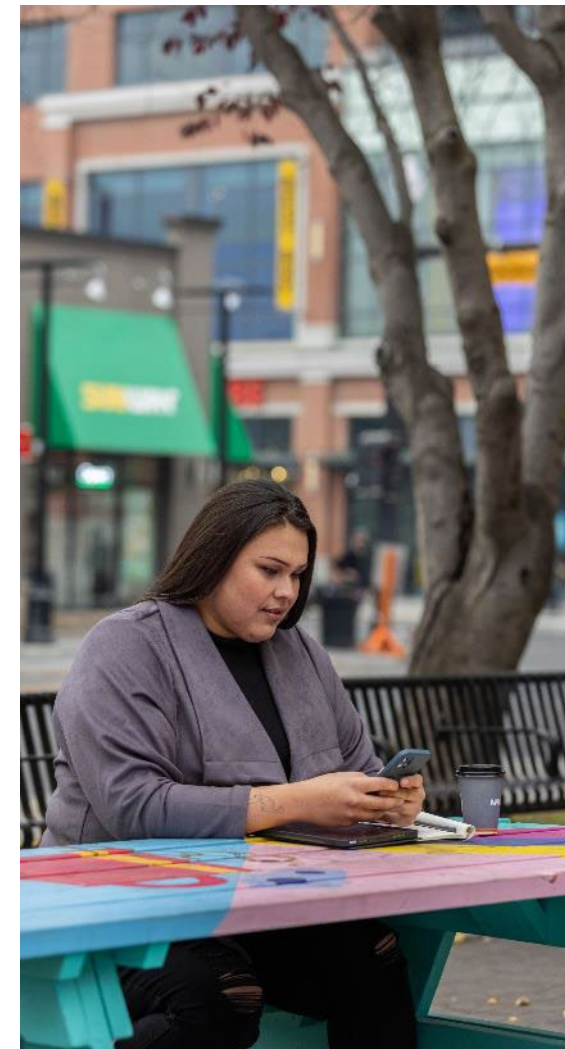
Those with older teens (and early 20s) mentioned their kids like going with their friends to nightclubs on 17th Ave., or the casino. Some older teens are not fans of downtown. They think parking is expensive and downtown can be dangerous (with open drug use and unpredictable people), so some avoid it – preferring to go to their local malls and bars to hang out.

Awareness of current and upcoming (downtown) events

- The overall takeaway across participants is that there is a **lack of awareness and associated advertising of all the events, installations, and programming** happening in Calgary and supported by The City.
- The upcoming **Lilac Festival** (Sunday, June 2) was top of mind for many, having seen banners on bridges or heard about it on the radio. **Neighbour Day** (June 15) was also mentioned, hearing from the mayor and on the news.
- **Annual events and festivals** were also mentioned: Calgary Stampede (parade and pancake breakfasts), Folk Fest, Cultural Festivals (Salsa Festival, Carifest, etc.), Beakerhead, Canada Day at Prince's Island Park and Olympic Plaza, Pride events, etc.
- Participants were disappointed that they do not know about all the events, installations, and opportunities that could engage in across the city. Some even reported feeling mad not knowing about such happenings. This was because they felt that City-initiated and City-run events use their tax dollars and yet they do not know about them. This finding suggests that improving communication on events, installations, and opportunities might have a noted positive influence on perceptions and satisfaction with The City.



I don't know what to do or where to go. If I knew [what was going on], I would be more likely to go downtown. – No kids





Adjacent neighbourhoods

Calgarians were asked about neighbourhoods adjacent to downtown, and whether they prefer to go to other areas around downtown, instead of going to the downtown core specifically. Across all groups, the diversity of communities was felt to be a part of Calgary's charm.

Downtown workers specifically said they love downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods equally. For example, when asked about this preference, one downtown worker said: *"It doesn't matter to me. I love Kensington as well, because there's a lot of different things that you can see there, different boutiques, different shops, restaurants as well, so something new. Yeah, that's just for a change."*

However, the other groups in this research noted that there are things that adjacent neighbourhoods offer that downtown does not. Inglewood, Kensington and Bridgeland are described as unique, friendly, and desirable. Parking is more accessible and affordable and there are lots of restaurants, bars, and little shops.

In addition to the above, Kensington is described as walkable with markets, shops, restaurants, Carifest, and "Chunked" (cookies). Inglewood is quieter with less traffic. It has the Esker Foundation and Fish Hatchery (feed the fish, Interpretive Centre), Night Markets and Craft Breweries. Bridgeland has interesting installations and Village Ice Cream. The East Village and Marda Loop (playgrounds) were also mentioned.

Encouragement to visit downtown



Calgarians, we spoke with, said they would **visit downtown more often if they felt safer and transit was improved in communities** (so they would not have to drive and park or take an expensive Uber or taxi). They also want **transit to be more affordable**, suggesting Day Passes and Family Passes be made available. Some Seniors did not know about the discounted pass that is available to them.



Downtown workers generally go home after work, having spent the day in the core, unless they have a reason to stay, i.e., meet up with friends, go to a show, etc.



Participants reported providing more “activations” in the core, e.g., live music events, art shows, and interactive events would also encourage visits. However, **the key is to communicate to Calgarians that events, spaces, and programs are available** so they can become engaged with downtown. (Note: there was little awareness of the new SAM Centre.)

Attracting folks in winter

Summer (Spring through Fall) is definitely more inviting, and accessible. Some suggestions from participants to attract folks downtown during the winter months include:

- Increase awareness of free and fun opportunities, i.e., skating in Olympic Park, free ice rink on 17th Ave, Offer free skate rentals.
- Create a Winter Wonderland or Winter Festival (like Winnipeg, as big as Stampede) – Maple syrup on snow; hot chocolate stands, Ice Maze, Ice Castle, Ice Sculptures (cognizant of Chinook melts!).
- “Lean into being a Winter City. – No kids
- “Christmas lights make the winter less miserable. – Youth
- Christmas Market on Stephen Ave.
- Pop-up Fire Pits & heated patios (with Crocs & Curl games).
- The Globe – Film Fests (e.g., Off the Cuff).
- “Protect the Globe! – No kids
- “Toque Fest” or something to rival Stampede to bring the city together (during winter).
- Indoor events at BMO Centre, new arena, Devonian Gardens.
- Pop-up dining experiences in heated domes (like London, UK).
- The new Glenbow Museum being free.

Although Calgarians do not envision their city becoming the next Las Vegas, the new Event Centre (& arena), bringing in celebrities and performers for concerts and shows will help Calgary become an **Entertainment Destination** year-round. Currently, the Stampede makes Calgary a destination for many locals and visitors.

In addition to the Event Centre, Youth suggested bringing the city to life with more lights, live music, street food and night markets.

“Stampede takes over and dwarfs everything else. – Youth



Amenities, programming, and installations to encourage downtown visits

Participant shared their ideas of what they need or want to see more of downtown – in terms of:

Amenities

- Cheaper/free parking options.
- Things for visitors/new to Calgary.
- Bigger (live) theatres and dance performances.
- Intimate experiences at the Convention Centre, Jack Singer.
- All sports – invite teams (i.e., volleyball, baseball).
- More green spaces and playgrounds for kids and adults.
- Allow pets on patios, etc.
- Vendors on Stephen Ave.
- Markets in parks.
- A Recreation Centre (old Greyhound location).
- Petting Zoo.

Installations/Activations (e.g., art pieces)

- Cool art (e.g., the “Head”, Water Droplet at Stampede, sculptures on Stephen Ave).
- Interactive art! (dipping birds at the Library, Telus Centre).
- Expand BUMP (Beltline Urban Mural Project).
- Provide a map of where installations and murals are located.

Programming

- Food Truck Fest.
- Hot Chocolate Fest in February.
- Children’s Fest.
- Family Skating events.
- Free events.
- Comedy.
- Kids arts & crafts.
- Car Show.
- Murder Mysteries.
- Educational events.
- Music events with instruments for folks to play.
- More family events, e.g., Shakespeare in the Park for kids, concerts for kids, Paw Patrol, Calaway Park shows, and Immersive Disney.
- Drop-in events or time slots to avoid over-crowding.
- City Passes(booklet) with discounted tickets to events or attractions (like NYC).
- Like Stampede, but other times of year to create family traditions.



Idea Testing: Events, Installations, Programming

City of Calgary's role in testing ideas

Calgarians were asked what they feel is the City of Calgary's role around testing new and innovative ideas for events and public spaces.



Youth (18-24) felt there should be more venues or areas for activities. They appreciated the efforts The City makes; they would also like more promotion of events, as well as a monthly calendar of all events easily available to centralize such information.



Parents of younger kids (<12) did not necessarily expect The City to come up with new ideas, but rather expected The City to build on nostalgia and grassroots initiatives and bring new things in from other cities (e.g., Toronto). There was concern about safety in large crowds (keeping track of little ones). Parents suggested opening events an hour earlier specifically for kids and/or have Family Hours.



Parents of tweens & teens (13-18) felt it is The City's role to try new things to draw people and attract businesses. They appreciated The City talking to residents via focus groups. For many events, they did not connect to The City of Calgary sponsorship and wanted The City to showcase, i.e., "This is what we do for you." They also suggested having more concerts, celebrities, and a big year-round attraction, like The Edmonton Mall.



Downtown workers believed The City must grant approval for events, be responsible for research and testing, and provide access to funding/grants for new events and festivals. In addition, they felt The City is responsible for residents' safety and expected a police presence.



Those without children wanted it to be easy to include communities, remove red tape, make it easy to get a permit, and make it easy for third parties to partner with The City. They also believed it is The City's role to advertise all events, festivals, installations, etc.



Seniors felt it is The City's responsibility – even if an industry may be the sponsor. *"They're it. Who else is going to do it?"* They would like to understand what the budget is for such events, installations, and programs, and feel The City should look to other world-class cities for best practices.

Idea testing

The following description (“Goal”) was shared with participants.

Goal:

As downtown continues to transform, The City along with our partners are committed to bringing more events and activations downtown to support vibrancy.

Creating engaging experiences and dynamic public spaces builds community, fosters creativity and stimulates economic growth in the heart of our city.

Nine (9) ideas were then “tested” with participants to get their initial reactions and suggestions. Ideas were presented in a randomized order and included:

1

LobbyFest

2

Los Trompos

3

Glenbow at the Edison

4

Century Gardens Basketball Courts

5

Century Gardens Basketball Event

6

Winter City Design Competition

7

Creative Wayfinding Mural

8

The Alcove Centre for the Arts Development’s Vacant Space Activation

9

Lot 6 Activation

Idea testing: LobbyFest

Description: For three days in September 2023, LobbyFest engaged 30 community partners to host 19 events and labs, co-create 8 installations and activate 4 lobbies. The goal was to engage a wide array of citizens in envisioning and shaping the future of Calgary's urban core.



Youth
(18-24)

Families
<12

Families
13-18

No
Kids

Downtown
Workers

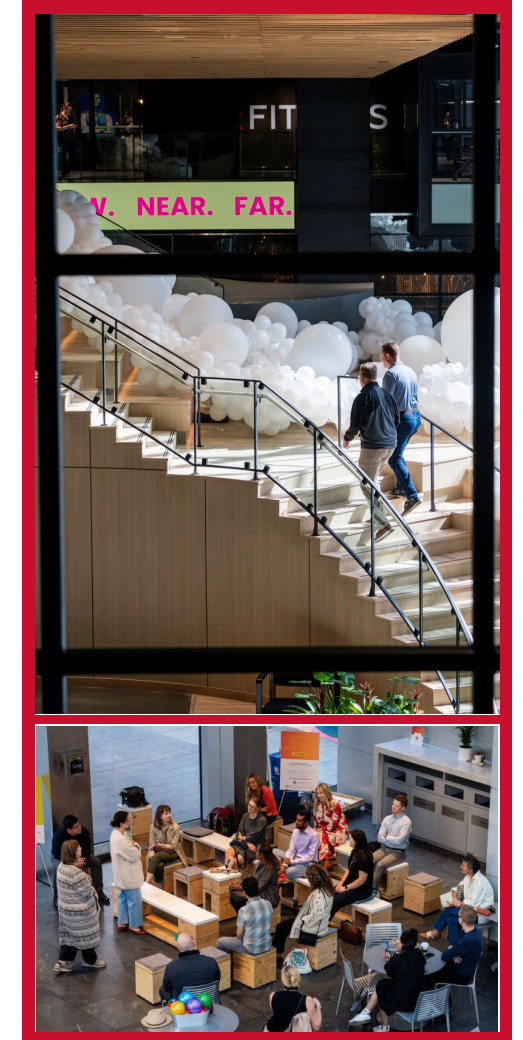
Seniors



LobbyFest was only of interest to a couple of youths (who also work downtown) and several seniors. Families, those with No Kids and Downtown Workers did not choose this as one of their top three events to attend. That said, those who work downtown would check it out if they happened upon it. It was suggested to have it in the winter since the installations and activities are inside. Visitors could use the path system to get to the various lobbies (if they knew where they were).

No one was aware that LobbyFest had taken place in September 2023.

A break when working downtown. It would be good to have it in the winter. - Youth



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 24

Idea testing: Los Trompos

Description: From May 1-28, The City is excited to bring a splash of colour and dizzying fun to Lot 6 (311 8 Street S.W.) through a large-scale, interactive installation called Los Trompos, creating a place of joy and connection in downtown Calgary.



Youth
(18-24)



Families
<12



Families
13-18



No
Kids



Downtown
Workers

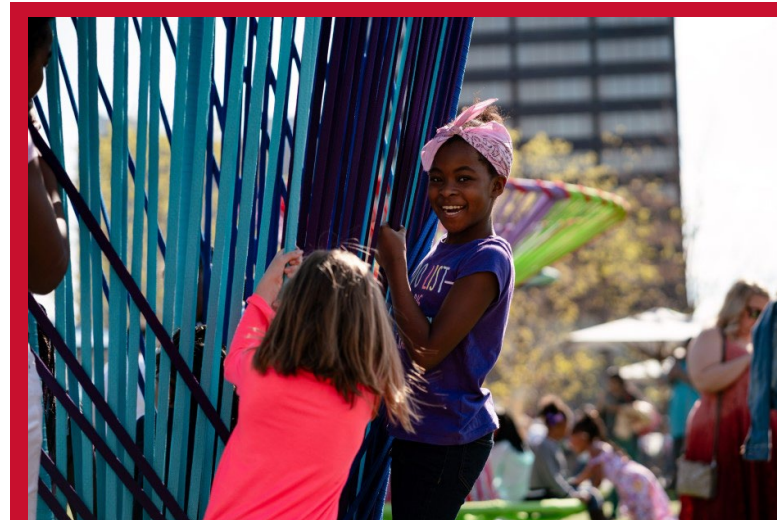


Seniors



Los Trompos is of interest to mostly families with kids (12 and under), and downtown workers thought it would be fun to visit when on a break. One young person loves playgrounds and was interested in attending, as well as two seniors. Described as family-friendly, playful, fun, interactive and attractive to kids. Participants were curious about the meaning of Los Trompos and who had designed the installation.

Several were disappointed to learn that this installation happened during the month of May, they did not know about it and therefore missed it.



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 25

Idea testing: Glenbow at the Edison

Description: The Glenbow Museum opened a temporary satellite exhibition space in downtown Calgary in March 2022 and will operate until the museum's renovation is complete.

Youth (18-24)	Families <12	Families 13-18	No Kids	Downtown Workers	Seniors

Most were unaware that the **Glenbow is open at a temporary location (Edison)**, assuming it was closed until the renovations are completed at the original location. Only a couple of participants mentioned that they had visited.

Now that participants know it is still open – and that it's free(!), several chose this as one of their top three attractions. About half the youth were interested in visiting, as were a handful of families, those with no kids and a couple of downtown workers.



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 26

Idea testing: Century Gardens Basketball Courts

Description: Creation of basketball courts located in the northwest corner of Century Gardens in Downtown Calgary.



Youth
(18-24)

Families
<12

Families
13-18

No
Kids

Downtown
Workers

Seniors



Century Garden Basketball Courts were appreciated, giving Calgarians a free space to shoot hoops or play three on three. It also adds colour and vibrancy to the northeast corner of Century Gardens. It promotes being active, healthy living, and a sense of community.

It was chosen by a few families with teens, a couple of youths, and a few downtown workers as one of their top three attractions. (The other segments did not select this.)



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 27

Idea testing: Century Gardens Basketball Event

Description: On Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023, The City and our partners hosted a grand opening celebration of the Century Gardens basketball tri-courts and had a 3-3 basketball tournament. Over 500 people attended.



Youth
(18-24)



Families
<12



Families
13-18



No
Kids



Downtown
Workers



Seniors



Century Gardens Basketball Event, however, was thought to be a great idea, bringing together the community, especially if it becomes an annual event to look forward to. A few youths, a few with kids, as well as half of the downtown workers and a couple of seniors chose this event in their top three ideas. Considered great for families and fun to watch, some were disappointed that they had missed it in September 2023.



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

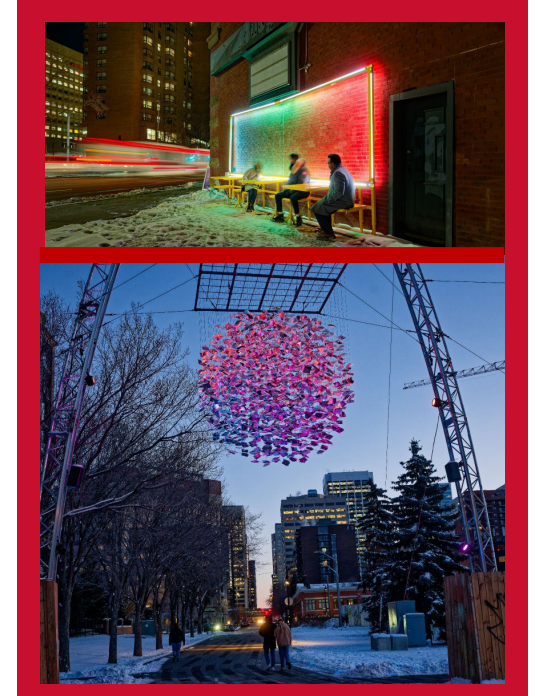
No star = no votes. 28

Idea testing: Winter City Design Competition

Description: The City invites designers, artists and students each fall to imagine the possibilities for winter city design in our downtown. We want people to explore and push beyond the boundaries of what public spaces in Calgary can be during the winter season.



Youth (18-24)	Families <12	Families 13-18	No Kids	Downtown Workers	Seniors
		★	★	★	★



Winter City Design Competition was a major hit with families with teens/tweens, those with no kids, downtown workers, and seniors. Seen as a way to combat “cabin fever” and add colour to cold, dark days. Youth and those with kids (under 12) said that they would be less likely to journey downtown to see this (i.e., not their top 3). Participants felt this was a great opportunity to feature local artists and brighten up the city’s core during the winter. One participant mentioned Calgary needs more of this type of creativity to be considered a world-class city. Assuming there would be different works of art every year, given it is a competition.

An immersive experience, it was suggested to provide a map of locations with information about each installation, so walking from one to the next could be an excursion. And it’s free! Another suggestion was to provide heaters, coffee, or hot chocolate along the way.

Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 29

Idea testing: Creative Wayfinding Mural

Description: Installation of a wayfinding mural on either side of the Municipal Building to guide downtown visitors to explore destinations on either side – Stephen Avenue and the East Village.



Youth
(18-24)



Families
<12



Families
13-18



No
Kids



Downtown
Workers

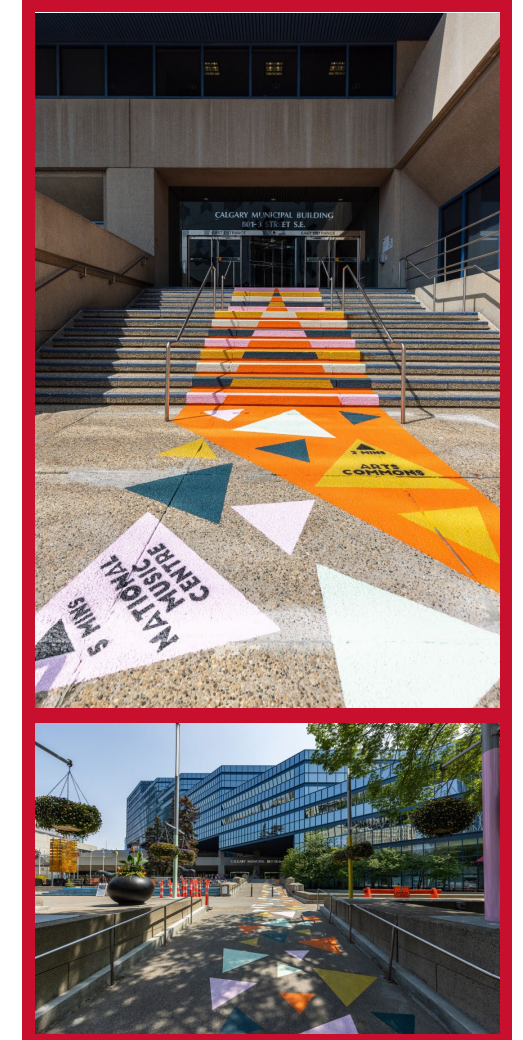


Seniors



“Fun and colourful”, **Creative Wayfinding Murals** were appreciated by everyone for themselves or visitors to the city. The majority of those with no kids, and a few from each of the other segments (with the exception of families with kids under 12) chose this as one of their top three ideas.

They like the idea of discovering things to do or see along the way – a planned or unplanned adventure. Participants felt that this wayfinding approach could be extended to other areas of the downtown core. One participant noted that there is something similar in Bridgeland.



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 30

Idea testing: The Alcove Centre for the Arts Development's Vacant Space Activation

Description: Create a recreational hub in Downtown and curate, support and produce arts-focused workshops and events as well as facilitate a drop-in collaborative community art space.



**Youth
(18-24)**



**Families
<12**



**Families
13-18**



**No
Kids**



**Downtown
Workers**



Seniors



The Alcove Center for The Arts Development's Vacant Space Activation was thought to be a "mouthful". However, the idea behind it – to provide a sense of community, workshops, drop-in activities, and an opportunity to meet new people – are seen as the primary benefits. It welcomes people of all ages and provides a sense of belonging. Mostly families, some with no kids and some downtown workers were especially interested in this, choosing it as one of their top three ideas. A couple of youth and a senior also chose this as one of their favourites. Although difficult to read, participants appreciated that a calendar of events is provided with various ways to engage so they can see what's happening and plan ahead. Even those who do not consider themselves to be "artsy" were inspired to check it out and try something new.



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 31

Idea testing: Lot 6 Activation

Description: Installation of temporary equipment and infrastructure to allow for event hosting to revitalize the area in the downtown West End. This included purchasing a sea-can food/bar container, running electricity, and hiring temporary security patrols for the area.



Youth
(18-24)

Families
<12

Families
13-18

No
Kids

Downtown
Workers

Seniors



Lot 6 Activation, felt to be a great idea, was chosen by the majority of youth and those with no kids. A handful of the others (across segments) also selected this as one of their top three events to engage in. Overall, it was thought to be a great way to revitalize a “dead space”, and being near the river is a bonus. A few recalled this area being where the Food Festival was held. Attending pop-up events was seen as a fun way to spend time, have food and beverages, meet up with friends or lounge in a hammock (as shown above). Note: The “sea-can food/bar container” needed to be described to understand the setting.



Note: The size of the stars qualitatively represents the # of votes (e.g., the bigger the star, the more votes).

No star = no votes. 32

Sources of information about the city

Overall, participants preferred to hear about events happening downtown via social media accounts. Several said that they wished there was one single source (with a monthly calendar) to find out what is happening in their city.

1

When it comes to events, festivals, and cool things to do or see downtown, participants reported relying heavily on word of mouth and social media – mostly Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and a couple of mentions of Reddit. A few said they follow influencers who post what is happening around town. Videos are more likely to get their attention.

2

Few participants overall reported watching the news. Some stated they visit The City's website, but generally for information about parks, snow removal, garbage, etc. The majority do not use the website to source events as they find it difficult to navigate and/or do not think to look for information there. One participant said she found the Event Calendar on the website, but there were only a couple of things noted.

3

Participants said they do not hear from their City Councilors about what is happening in Calgary (and many do not know who their councilor is). Only a couple of people mentioned Tourism Calgary, and no one had heard of #ExploreDowntownYYC Campaign.

Specific online and influencer accounts mentioned were:

@jana.janevska

@nni.giang

@curisitycalgary

@sarah.sociables

<https://mustdocalgary.com>

<https://yycwhatson.ca/> (Calgary Arts Developments)

<https://dailyhive.com/calgary>

<https://curiocity.com/calgary/>



*I spend a lot of time on TikTok and that's probably the best way to target me, because **a short video of someone talking about something that's going on or showing, or talking about what to expect or their experience, that's more likely to catch my attention than just seeing a picture with a date or something like that.** – No Kids*

Appendix

This appendix presents a detailed breakdown of the populations represented in the focus groups.

Population	# in the Groups
Gender	
Man	16
Woman	29
Disability (participant or member of household)	6
Household income	
Less than \$30,000	2
\$30,000 to <\$60,000	8
\$60,000 to <\$90,000	8
\$90,000 to <\$120,000	8
\$120,000 to <\$150,000	9
\$150,000 or more	10
Level of education	
Completed high school or some high school	6
Some post-secondary (e.g., technical school, college, university)	1
Completed technical school or college	11
Completed a university degree	27
Employment status	
Employed full time	31
Employed part time	5
Recently unemployed (within the last 6 months)	2
Unemployed for some time (longer than 6 months)	1
Student	2
Retired	3
Parent/homemaker	1

Population (continued)	# in the Groups
Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)	3
Racialized	8
Disability (participant or member of household)	6
Marital status	
Single (never married)	18
Married/common-law	20
Separated/divorced	5
Widowed	2
Age	
18 to 24	7
25 to 34	7
35 to 44	10
45 to 55	10
55 to 64	8
65 to 74	3
Residence	
Own	30
Rent	15
City Quadrant	
Southwest	14
Southeast	10
Northwest	11
Northeast	10



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