



The City and University of Calgary launch downtown safety and vibrancy initiative

Calgary, 10 March 2020

Today, The City of Calgary and the University of Calgary are announcing the launch of the 9 Block program, an effort to address vibrancy and safety issues in the nine blocks that surround City Hall.

The City and the University of Calgary's School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) have identified an opportunity for collaboration to pilot quick solutions in downtown's arts, culture and governmental hub that are aimed improving safety, supporting the neighbourhood's businesses, and finding low-cost solutions through partnerships.

"The area around City Hall is the heart of Downtown Calgary – it's where government, education, and the arts come together," said Mayor Naheed Nenshi. "I'm thrilled that through this partnership with the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, we'll have the opportunity to test inexpensive and innovative ideas aimed at improving the safety and vibrancy in this neighbourhood."

The partnership between The City and the University of Calgary focuses on students and researchers at SAPL exploring how the nine blocks around City Hall can become a more welcoming, distinct and vibrant place for all Calgarians and visitors through innovative design, planning and programming strategies. Urban Alliance, the partnership between The City and the University of Calgary, will support hiring a group of SAPL students over the summer to design and implement a small tactical urbanism project in the area to test out potential improvement strategies.

"We located our City Building Design Lab in the heart of our downtown to take on initiatives like the 9 Block program," said John Brown, dean of SAPL. "Our mission is to bring together our students and researchers with municipal policy makers and the public to explore new directions in city-building. Our students are very excited to take on this opportunity to develop and implement thoughtful, innovative solutions in the neighbourhood they interact with every day as students."

The City will also be initiating projects focused on improving wayfinding, programming and building community partnerships in the area. The wayfinding initiative is examining ways to improve connections in and around City Hall to make the area more welcoming and easier to navigate. In terms of programming, The City is planning better ways to use public spaces in the area and making it easier for citizens to access these spaces.

The City is also starting conversations with our community partners in the area to address safety issues and to better assist vulnerable Calgarians. This important piece of the 9 Block program is part of The City's commitment to community action on mental health and addiction, with actions aligning with the development of The City's mental health and addictions strategy.

"It's going to take all of us to build and reshape this area, and downtown as a whole, and it's important we all take a shared position in stewarding the 9 Block area into the future," said Thom Mahler, lead for The City's Downtown Strategy. "This program is a major piece of the our Downtown Strategy and The



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY



Calgary

City's continued commitment to support the recovery and diversification of Calgary's economy and building a foundation for a great future for this important downtown area."

Supporting safety and vibrancy measures is an important piece of The City's Downtown Strategy – the effort to support and incentivize private investment, generate visits and spending, and provide amenities and services to enhance the quality of life of people living and working downtown.

For more information about the 9 Block program, please visit calgary.ca/9block.