Pilot project takes step toward realizing value of alleyways
Three-year research partnership proposes transformational pathway to revitalizing Calgary’s downtown

Calgary, AB – Alleyways have the potential to be the backbone for a dynamic, multi-layered city experience and a new pilot project aims to realize that potential by revitalizing the back alleys of Calgary’s downtown.

The Calgary Downtown Association (CDA) has partnered with the University of Calgary’s School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) on a mission to change Calgary’s downtown fabric. The partnership has embarked on the Green Alley Project (GAP), a pilot research project that looks at otherwise forgotten and gritty downtown alleyways — transforming them to places of beauty, creativity and value.

The first alley to be activated is located between Le Germaine on 9th Avenue SW and the 100-west block of Stephen Ave — entering off Centre Street or 1st Street SW. This transformation will include a painted mural, a laneway painting, prefabricated wood furniture and a proposed stormwater strategy. The urban installation will be unveiled during the TransformALLEY launch event being held at the site today.

“We believe in the power and potential of growing a downtown post-secondary presence to support Calgary’s downtown recovery and resilience — so we’re thrilled to partner with UCalgary’s School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape. Secondly, we’re committed to challenging the status quo in testing new concepts that can stimulate economic development or diversity. Enhancing the downtown experience for the attraction of Calgarians, visitors and private investment is a top priority; the Green Alley Project is an innovative and progressive initiative that we’re excited to invest in,” said Marco De Iaco, Executive Director, Calgary Downtown Association.

Since April 2019, the CDA and SAPL have been working together to generate new knowledge, demonstrate long-term benefits of green alleys, and build momentum amongst stakeholders, policy-makers and the public, with a three-year goal of adding a new dimension to downtown Calgary’s urban experience.

“Urban alleys have the potential to be transformed from derelict service corridors into sustainable places that are amenities for the public,” says Dr. John L. Brown, SAPL Dean. “Our collaborative research teams are taking a multi-pronged approach to investigate how focused and informed design can facilitate placemaking and economic value. This pilot initiative presents ideas for enhanced stormwater infrastructure, urban furniture which includes shelter and comfortable seating, and playful cues for navigation. This intersection of research, design and public engagement is aimed squarely at developing scalable high-quality urban experiences in Calgary’s downtown core.”

The TransformALLEY GAP launch event will be held in conjunction with the Art and the City exhibition Kickoff party. The Art and the City exhibit will include the work from the sketch crawl, a walking tour of downtown Calgary art where participants sketch various points along the route. The sketch crawl was led by visiting landscape architecture professors Chip Sullivan (UC Berkeley) and Elizabeth Boults (UC Davis). The Green Alley Project is one of the sites on the public sketch crawl. The launch event will be held both inside The Pioneer Gallery (117 8 Ave SW) and in the alleyway behind.
The Green Alley Project is a unique partnership for both the CDA and SAPL to open the conversation to change the view of how Downtown Calgary currently is and how it could be. For more information, please see: calgarydowntown.com and sapl.ucalgary.ca/GAP.

Join the conversation:

#greenalleyproject, #transformALLEY

UCalgary and SAPL: @ucalgary, @ucalgarysapl, #ucalgarysapl, #cbdlab, sapl.ucalgary.ca

Calgary Downtown Association: @downtowncalgary, #iamdowntown, downtowncalgary.com

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About the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape
The School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) offers undergraduate and professional graduate studies in architecture, planning and landscape architecture, as well as research degrees and post-professional programs. SAPL School delivers a distinctly different design school experience that combines a rich, interdisciplinary design-based philosophy with an entrepreneurial mindset and a deep commitment to working with industry stakeholders, community leaders, at local, national, and international levels to address some of society’s biggest challenges in new, creative ways. SAPL recently opened a pilot satellite research hub in downtown Calgary called the City Building Design Lab.

Find out more at sapl.ucalgary.ca and follow @ucalgarysapl on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

About Calgary Downtown Association
The Calgary Downtown Association (CDA) represents over 2,600 businesses in the Downtown core. Their vision is to, mindfully and meaningfully, shape the downtown core, being a catalyst for downtown vitality and vibrancy. The CDA continues to take steps to solidify its position as a champion for downtown businesses and a leader in urban placemaking. For more information on the CDA, please visit www.downtowncalgary.com. Follow the Calgary Downtown Association at @downtowncalgary on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.