

Better Every Day



THE CITY MANAGER'S QUARTERLY REPORT ISSUE 3

COMPASSION THROUGH EVERYDAY INNOVATION

Better Every Day is a publication of The City of Calgary—we're Calgarians serving the city we live in, the city we love, making life better every day.

FOLLOW US



facebook.com/cityofcalgary



@cityofcalgary



instagram.com/cityofcalgary

@cityofcalgary



Download the 311 app

Located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, and home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3, we are situated on land where the Bow and Elbow Rivers meet. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is *Moh'kins'tsis*, which we know as Calgary.

CALGARY INCORPORATED
AS A TOWN IN:

1884

POPULATION:

1,306,400

**Second lowest
cost of living of
Canadian cities.**

(MERCER, 2021)

MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER

The prolonged and unpredictable pandemic has not only demanded that we do things differently at The City, but it has also provided us the opportunity to shine when Calgarians needed us most. One thing I am sure of is that, as an organization, we are getting really skilled at adapting.

But adaptability is only made possible through innovation. I am constantly amazed at how we continue to provide Calgarians with improvements in programs and services and offer compassion through everyday innovation. Understanding the need to be nimble, to look at things through a new lens, we are building the habit of recognizing and exploring new opportunities to increase service value, equity, and impact.

When we think of innovation, often the first thoughts that spring to mind include autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, the internet of things, even the latest smart phone. At The City, we easily think about our important work in building networks, through our support of 5G and wireless infrastructure, City fibre, and rights-of-way, or the work of our civic partner, Platform Calgary, enabling startups and inspiring disruption. But innovation happens any time we create, deliver or enable a unique or new service for our residents and businesses, adapting existing practices, processes, structures, or beliefs, and trying new things with the goal of achieving our purpose of making life better every day.

This edition of *Better Every Day* highlights a small selection of the many initiatives that demonstrate our compassion through everyday innovation. I invite you to reflect upon what you are doing differently and rise to the challenge to support Calgary's recovery in the new normal.

David Duckworth, P. Eng, MBA





PLAYING OUR PART IN INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS

We can all imagine being a parent to three young boys makes for a busy household, and what better way to get outside and burn some energy than to visit the local playground. For Candice, this everyday activity, which many parents take for granted, isn't so easy. Her 10-year-old son Kanen, twin to Keagan, lives with cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair – and unfortunately, most playgrounds simply aren't accessible or inclusive.

"I would see a lot of moms sitting and chatting, having coffee at the playground, but that wasn't my experience, ever," explains Candice. "Often when visiting a playground, we'd have to bring an aide with us to assist Kanen on the equipment. Having the twins and a younger son, it was difficult keeping an eye on one while physically assisting the other. It wasn't like I could go to the playground and meet friends for a playdate and just let the kids play. It had to be a planned event where I would bring someone with me. It is very physically demanding and simply wasn't enjoyable."

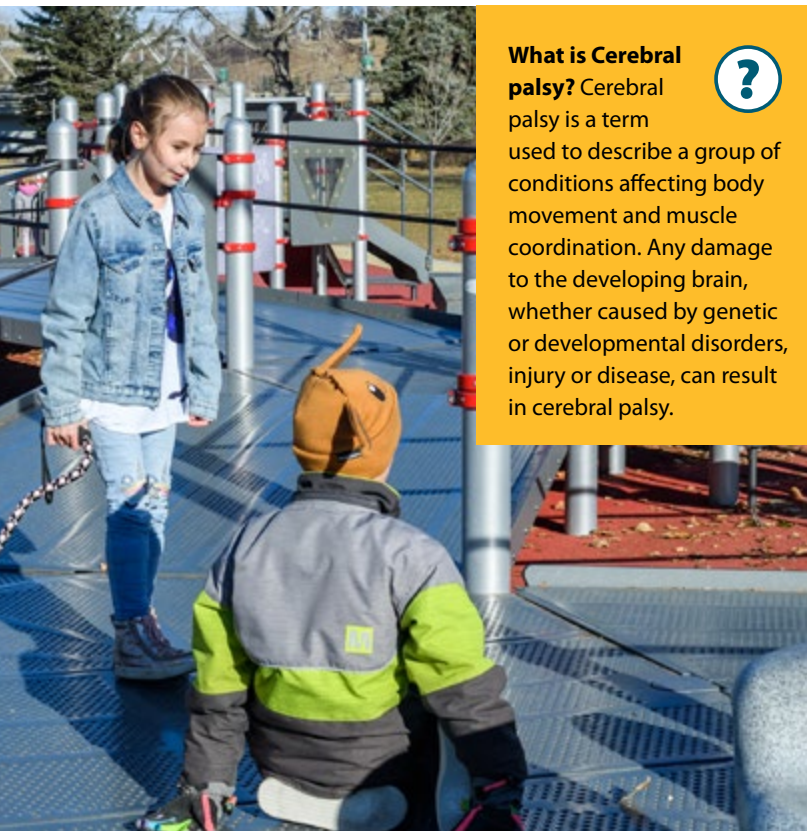


Kanen >

In 2018, The City of Calgary, with funding from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, created Calgary's largest universally inclusive playground located at Shouldice Park, as part of an initiative to build several playgrounds of this kind across Canada. This playground set a new standard for inclusive play through imaginative and accessible spaces.

An inclusive playground goes beyond minimum accessibility standards to provide an environment where children (and citizens) of all abilities and needs can interact. These spaces utilize a set of universal design principles that guide the placement and overall function of the play structures, pathways, seating, equipment, and other amenities. Inclusive playgrounds are designed for equitable participation supporting the needs of a person with mobility limitations but might also cater to the needs of a child who is visually impaired or living with autism. In an inclusive playground, children, families and caretakers can play together in the same space, regardless of ability, needs, age, gender, culture, or race.

"An 'accessible' playground used to be a place where there was a ramp where a kid could go up to a platform to a steering wheel – that is not going to entertain anyone for long," laughs Candice. "There is so much more thought put into [inclusive playgrounds]. There are so many varying disabilities and kids with sensory issues, where a gravel, dusty surface just does not work. Being able to go to an inclusive playground, Kanen can play in his wheelchair instead of crawling to access the equipment and he can play unassisted."



What is Cerebral palsy? Cerebral palsy is a term used to describe a group of conditions affecting body movement and muscle coordination. Any damage to the developing brain, whether caused by genetic or developmental disorders, injury or disease, can result in cerebral palsy.



< Scarlett and Kanen





“I hope that The City continues to keep building these playgrounds because the more that we have throughout the city, the easier it’s going to be to access them as a regular outing instead of as a planned destination.

~Candice

The City aims to have one inclusive play space or recreational opportunity within a 5 km radius of every Calgarian as part of the Council-approved [Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan](#)

BUILDING MORE PLAYGROUNDS

Also in 2018, Calgary Parks presented the [Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan](#) to City Council. The goal was to begin planning inclusive playgrounds in Calgary, to support the importance of including everyone in play and recreation opportunities. With funding from the Alberta Government Municipal Stimulus Program and help from the Calgary Parks Foundation, The City was able to design, build and open nine inclusive playgrounds in 2021, with another scheduled to open in spring of 2022. Playground locations were selected based on a few factors: if there was an existing playground onsite enabling easier development; a site large enough to accommodate the larger format of an inclusive playground; access to either a parking lot, accessible street parking, or close to major transit routes; preferably a nearby public washroom and; the route/pathway to the site is accessible.

Kimberley Presser, Chief Executive Officer of Between Friends, is thrilled to have a safe and inclusive playground that can be incorporated as a part of their member programming. [Between Friends](#) is a Calgary-based charitable organization providing opportunities for people with disabilities to feel included and develop lasting friendships. They offer recreation, social and development opportunities, both that Between Friends creates and delivers, as well as by supporting members in community-based programs.

NEW INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND LOCATIONS:

Edworthy Inclusive Playground
5050 Spruce Drive S.W.

Elliston Inclusive Playground
17 Ave SE and 68 St S.E.

Hidden Hut Inclusive Playground
10504 Hidden Valley Dr N.W.

Glenmore South
8415 24 St S.W.

Glenmore North
7305 Crowchild Trail S.W.

Ramsay Inclusive Playground
MacDonald Ave S.E. & Bellevue Ave S.E.

Sandy Beach Inclusive Playground
4500 14A St S.W.

Somerset Inclusive Playground (open in spring 2022)
999 Somerset Square S.W.

Ted Harrison Inclusive Playground
Taralake Way N.E. & Taradale Dr N.E.

Vivo Inclusive Playground
Country Village Rd N.E. & Country Village Way N.E.





"Inclusion is our highest priority at Between Friends because we believe that everybody should be valued and have the opportunity to reach their full potential within society," explains Kimberley. "Our flagship program and what we're best known for is [Camp Bonaventure](#), which we offer at Sandy Beach River Edge Park, where a new inclusive playground was installed. We don't see the typical camper at Camp Bonaventure – our membership includes 86 different primary disabilities. Sometimes we have kids sign up and we have to research their disability because it's just so uncommon. Between Friends is just really appreciative that Sandy Beach was one of the playgrounds put forward. I'm not sure if that was purposeful because we are there, or if it just so happened to be a park that needed to be upgraded, but we're just really thankful that we get to access it."

HOW ARE THESE PLAYGROUNDS DIFFERENT?

^ L-R: Kanen, Scarlett and their siblings Griffin and Sawyer

Innovations in playground equipment and space design allow for greater inclusivity. Considerations are made from a variety of perspectives - from the selection of colours of equipment such as high contrast stair treads, fencing and maze gates for safety, unitary surfacing with seamless transitions, tactile panels with Braille and sensory play areas, quiet spaces, and ground level equipment for ease of access for kids and caregivers with mobility devices.

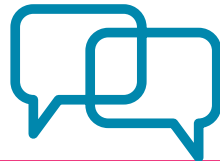




"I think it's just phenomenal to know that The City of Calgary is at the forefront of this," says Kimberley. "A publicly accessible inclusive playground for us means kids from our programs are interacting and integrating with other children from the community. Having these playgrounds just really helps us move through our vision of an inclusive community where people with disabilities are accepted and valued and exercise the right to play."

Kimberley notes the huge impact these inclusive spaces have on families. "As the parent of a seven-year-old, I know how chaotic and overwhelming our daily lives are. I take her to the park and she's off playing and I just have a few minutes to do something – whether that's drink a hot cup of coffee, answer a few emails on my phone. But when you have a kid with a disability, a trip to the park isn't like this. You are concerned if your kid is safe or engaged, or even overwhelmed...a child living with autism may find a typical park just too overwhelming. These [inclusive playgrounds] are safe spaces for anyone who wants to use them and connect with others and just be a regular kid. The opportunity for a child in a wheelchair to be able to use the swings is just incredible."

The City is committed to expanding the list of inclusive playgrounds across the city, welcoming all abilities in all four quadrants. As part of this initiative and for future planning, The City is seeking feedback from playground users to understand what improvements can be made to guide the design of future playgrounds.

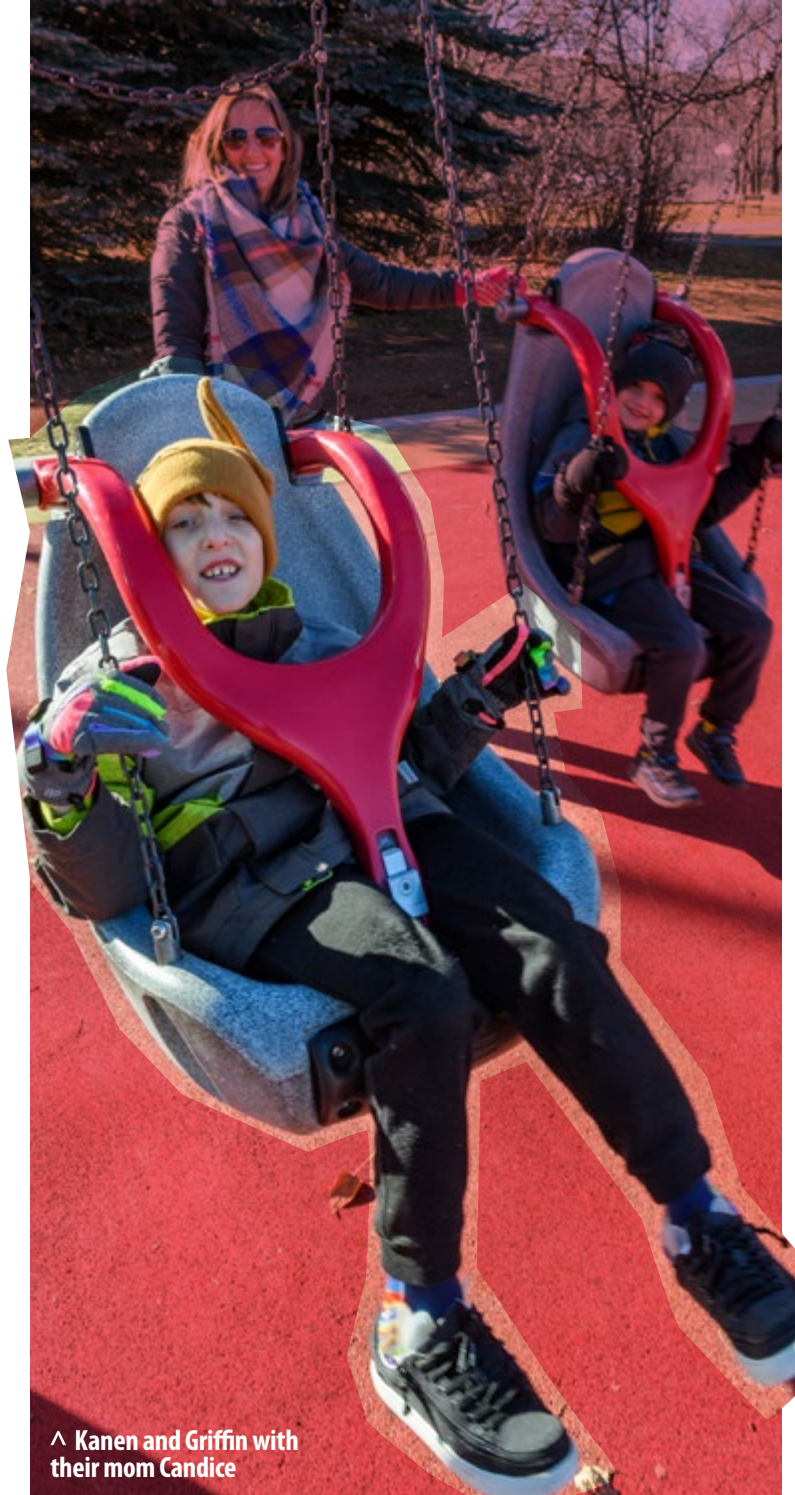


Have your say about creating accessible and inclusive play spaces

engage.calgary.ca/playgrounds

"It has just been awesome," says Candice. "I started working with cerebral palsy kids and families and so now we use a lot of the inclusive playgrounds as our coffee dates. It's another opportunity for us to provide support to families, and their kids can play, and the parents can talk and share challenges. It's been really great for us."

"Being able to go to these playgrounds, just impromptu, and not have to put all of my energy into helping Kanen to use the equipment ... he can go and he can play. And I can play with them as opposed to just being a physical helper. For Kanen, he can roll around in his chair and play tag with other kids without them having to make adaptations to the game for him. He can actually just go and play it their way."



^ Kanen and Griffin with their mom Candice

Visit [Calgary Playground Review](#) to see Calgary's top-rated accessible and inclusive playgrounds.

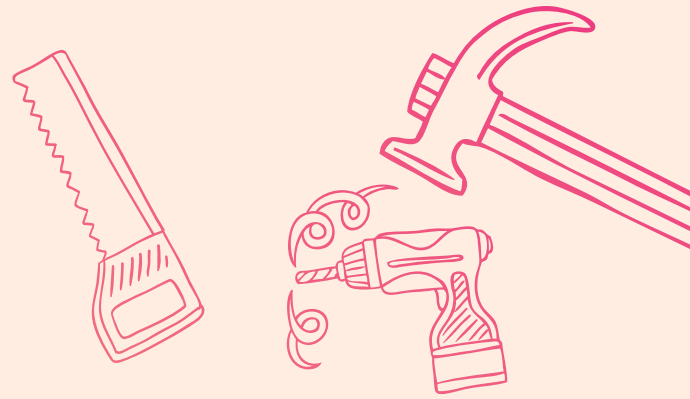


SEE MORE ABOUT INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS

Play video



NAILED IT! HOME IMPROVEMENT WEBINARS



For nearly two years, working and socializing remotely through online platforms has become the norm. Evolving health restrictions means more time spent at home, scrutinizing our spaces, and motivating many homeowners to take on renovations.

It is estimated that nearly half of Canadians started or were considering home renovations over the pandemic and The City of Calgary saw residential improvement permits up 33 per cent over the past two years. For City employees, an increased interest in renovations meant more building permits, more inspections, and increased inquiries from Calgarians looking for renovation advice.

“Prior to the pandemic, we attended home shows and held community events as a way to connect with Calgarians and offer face-to-face support on topics like permits and inspections,” says Cliff de Jong, manager of Calgary Safety Services. “After we were mandated to work from home, all the events were cancelled and so were our opportunities to connect in-person with citizens.”

Within the context of these unique circumstances, Calgary Building Services saw an opportunity to pioneer a series of online webinars in the Fall of 2020 to help Calgarians get the answers they needed on a variety of building topics. While it took one or two practice sessions before the team found their footing and got comfortable presenting online, the webinar program has surged in popularity for Calgarians looking for information regarding home renovations. To date, the team has delivered webinars on a wide variety of timely topics including: mould, renting and renovating basements suites, and building decks, to name a few. In addition, The City also began offering virtual inspections for plumbing, gas, building and electrical that can be [booked online](#).

In the hour-long free webinars, participants have access to City experts like planning service technicians and safety codes officers who can offer immediate answers to questions and help to ensure both contractors and do-it-yourselfers have everything in place before getting started. Each webinar is accessible in multiple languages and captioned.

“I think people are just more comfortable online. It’s a little more anonymous,” explains Cliff. “Instead of getting up in front of a room full of people and speaking into a mic, you can just type your question in a chat. I think it prompts people to be more participatory.”

All webinars are recorded so those who cannot join live can watch the content at their convenience, all from the comfort of their own home.

More than
1,100 people
have attended a webinar

Team answered
OVER 800
questions **LIVE**

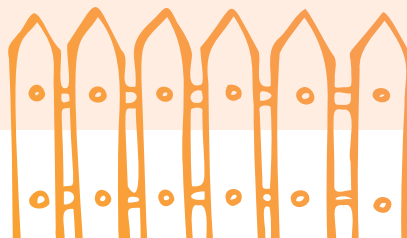
“After offering the first few webinars we discovered that participants were asking very thoughtful questions, asking for advice – the effectiveness of delivering information through these webinars was obvious,” says Cliff. “What started as a need and innovation as a reaction to the situation brought about by the pandemic will now be an option we will continue to offer. With the ability to have translated information in real time, the webinars are so powerful at providing the opportunity to reach a wide range of Calgarians, something we may not be able to provide in-person, all of the time.”



“THANK YOU! I loved learning about this and I hope the City continues to offer these meets. Incredibly educational! All the best to you all!

– Participant, Preventing Mould in Homes

Learn more at
calgary.ca/webinar





DIGITAL SERVICE SQUAD



Search engine optimization and Google rankings can seem like a different language to small businesses just establishing their footing online. But help is on the way! The Digital Service Squad is the latest initiative from The City of Calgary created to support small business.

Made possible through a partnership between [Business Link](#) and [Digital Main Street](#), and funded by the provincial government, the Squad will employ post-secondary students who will help support small businesses digitize their business.

“This is a great initiative that partners students who need experience with businesses who need help to increase their digital presence,” says Erin Chrusch, acting leader of the Business and Local Economy.

Small businesses needing assistance with websites, point of sale systems, social media strategies and platforms, streamlining business processes with digital tools and more, can now connect with the Digital Service Squad to help them adopt new technologies and embrace digital marketing.

The Digital Service Squad is expected to be available in early 2022. Small businesses can find out more at calgary.ca/business



#SupportLocalYYC campaign



CREATING CONNECTIONS THROUGH DIGITAL EQUITY

Access to technology has become vital during recent months. An October 2020 [McKinsey & Company report](#) notes that “digital adoption has taken a quantum leap” during the pandemic, accelerating the digitization of customers and operations and has “transformed business forever” with the largest shifts during the crisis the most likely to remain in the long term. Adjusting to COVID-19 meant that staying connected to family, friends and education, applying for programs and services, and the creation of safe workplaces required a quick adjustment to adopt digital technologies and resulted in the innovation of both processes and products.

While many businesses, schools, and households were able to react quickly to the changing environment and move to online platforms, not all Calgarians had access to the equipment and networks to enable life to continue so seamlessly.

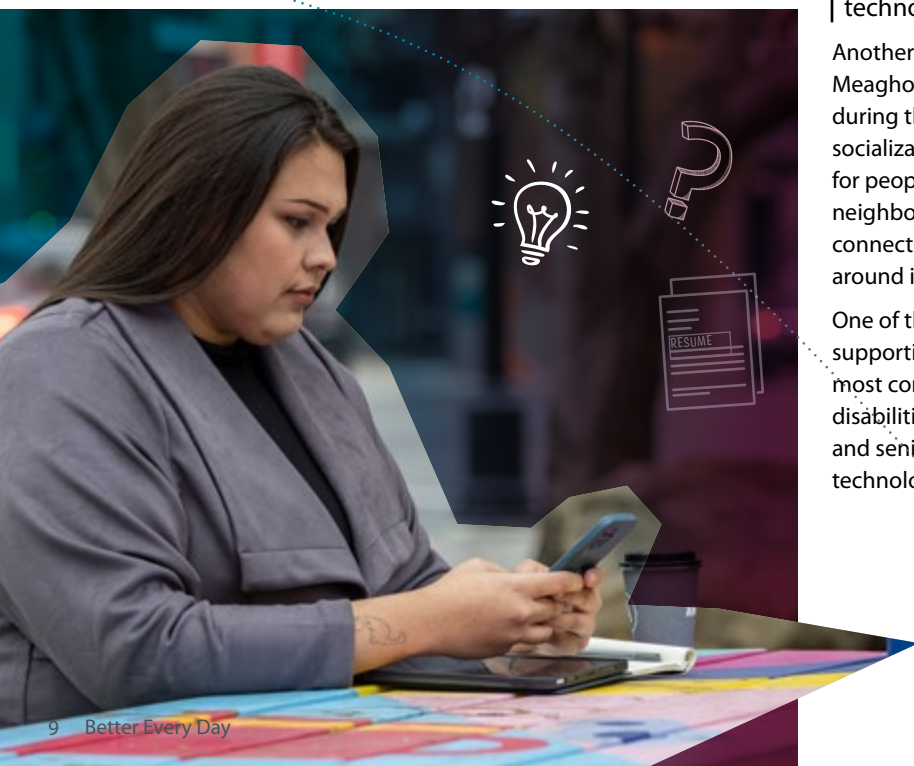
“We hear of parents who drive their kids to sit outside of a McDonald’s to be able to connect in to their free Wi-Fi so they can attend online school,” explains Meaghan Reid, executive director of Vibrant Communities Calgary, an organization working to reduce poverty in Calgary through the [Enough For All](#) initiative. “And they had to share one device, like a phone, between the parent and two school kids when schools went online. This scenario and many others around digital equity is one of our biggest challenges.”

Digital equity seeks to ensure that everyone—especially groups who are historically underserved or underrepresented—has the information technology capacity needed for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services. Removing barriers to digital inclusion and participation and working towards giving people of all backgrounds and circumstances optimal digital resources is essential to advancing equity.

“When you’re a Calgarian who lives in poverty – approximately 200,000 people at this point in time – if you are making decisions about ‘heat and eat’, the computer and the internet are going to be the first to go,” says Meaghan. “Access to the internet is a basic need because access to any of the services a person in poverty may need is all on the internet. How do we reframe that digital equity, education about how to use technology and the sustainability of it all, is a new basic need?”

Another way digital equity impacts Calgarians is through inclusion. Meaghan explains that physical isolation has been normalized during the pandemic with most of us adapting to online work and socialization. “We’ve offset this isolation with digital inclusion, but for people in poverty, you are now much more isolated than your neighbour. So, while the technology challenged us – the hardware, connectivity, sustainability and access – we also have a challenge around isolation. I can’t feel included if I am cut off from technology.”

One of the goals of Enough for All is that we live in a strong, supportive, inclusive community. Though Calgary is one of the most connected cities in Canada, findings show that persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, low-income individuals, newcomers, and seniors are the most impacted by poverty and lack of access to technology and online services.





WHAT ACTIONS ARE WE TAKING?

The City of Calgary and its partners are supporting the advancement of technology and infrastructure in a number of ways that aim to contribute to achieving digital equity. Through collaborations with partners like Vibrant Communities Calgary, the Is kitsii gome (Seven Brothers Circle), and the Calgary Public Library, The City is laying the groundwork for a more formal strategy. The City is looking to better understand the digital equity issues faced by Calgarians and where The City can help with the challenges, and perhaps catalyze, coordinate, and align organizations that are already mobilized in this work.

“We are bringing community partners together to have a holistic community conversation about who’s doing what and where the gaps are,” says Monique Nessel, Smart Cities program manager. “The other component is around research. We’re hopeful to partner with some of our post-secondaries and bring together that academic mindset. How do we know if we are moving the needle in the right direction, how extensive is the problem and what are the best avenues to take?”

Coupled with research and a meaningful, inclusive strategy, innovative and cutting-edge infrastructure is critical to achieve digital equity. Ground-breaking technologies leveraging a connected infrastructure, mixed in with successful experimentation help our city become more sustainable by bringing openness to data sharing and technology, building trust, and transparency.

Meaningful participation in civic life and emerging economies is increasingly dependent on being connected. Reducing digital disparity is imperative to achieving our economic outcomes.

~ Resilient Calgary strategy

THE PATH TO DIGITAL EQUITY



HARDWARE

- Tools
- Right for user
- Adequate



ACCESS

- Affordable
- Reliable
- Adequate
- Infrastructure



LITERACY

- Education
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Training



SUSTAINMENT

- Ongoing Supports
- Troubleshooting
- Monitoring

Calgary as a Smart City

Smart cities use data and technology to provide a sustainable and better quality of life for citizens. Through innovative solutions, a smart city delivers real value to citizens and businesses and has the potential to improve every aspect of community life. One of the goals of The City’s smart city approach is to become Canada’s most inclusive and resilient community by connecting all Calgarians, enabling access to the services, supports and information needed to be engaged and participate.

“Technology and data are the tools we will use to deliver our solutions; however, people will remain at the heart of everything we do,” explains Monique. “We will be planning and building out the projects for Calgarians using a Human-Centred Design (HCD) and management framework to ensure we are being inclusive. Our HCD approach will put the end-user at the core of the conversation to co-create and ensure solutions are what they need and are delivered with ease of use as a focus.”

Eduroam

Eduroam (education roaming) is a global initiative that provides simple, easy, secure connectivity from thousands of hotspots across more than 100 countries. The City of Calgary is now the second municipality in Canada to offer eduroam, based on the most secure encryption and authentication standards in existence today. Post-secondary students, staff, and faculty from participating organizations can now securely connect to the internet when they enter Calgary’s Municipal Building. Local students who have eduroam set up on their phones or laptops can automatically connect free of charge to the internet when on the main level of the Municipal Building, and access course materials, research and more without the costs of using their own data.





Did you know?



The City of Calgary has a **600+km** fibre network across Calgary

More than **82 public Wi-Fi sites** available downtown

Calgary has the **3rd largest** internet exchange (IX) in Canada

Calgary is **4th in North America** on the [Open Cities Index](#)

5G and beyond

As a means of supporting innovation, market competition, and remaining an attractive place to start or grow a business, The City is supporting wireless service providers (such as Rogers, Freedom Mobile and TELUS) to access City-owned assets for the deployment of small cell wireless equipment that will enable the next generation of wireless networks. The service providers are investing millions of dollars to deploy 5G and are most interested in accessing City street light poles. Street light poles are ideal for wireless infrastructure equipment due to their height, power availability, and locations throughout the entire city.

While 5G capabilities are promoted as a major economic driver, this technology will be instrumental in achieving digital equity. A lack of high-speed connectivity may limit opportunities for Calgarians, especially those in underserved populations and communities. As 5G becomes more available, it may offer a more cost competitive option for high speed connections and be widely distributed throughout the city using City infrastructure.

Availability of 5G may also improve services and systems such as educational online platforms, water management systems, autonomous vehicles, critical communications of first responders, access to healthcare services and professionals, and so much more. With the advancements made possible by the future of 5G, it is hoped that the Federal government, which governs policy on next generation mobile networks, will use the capabilities to help narrow both the economic and digital divide.

Internet Exchange (YYCIX)

The City was involved in the inception of the [Internet Exchange \(IX\)](#) in Calgary. IXs are found all over the world and help make the internet faster and keeps data more secure. An IX is a neutral point on the worldwide internet network that interconnects various autonomous internet operator networks. These may be connectivity providers, citizens, businesses, public administrations, application providers, or content providers.

The City of Calgary provides fibre optics as an in-kind service to the non-profit IX, which is used to build a highly redundant IX network. This means there is duplicated infrastructure where additional or alternate instances of network devices and connections are installed to ensure an alternate path in case of a failure on the primary service.

“The IX plays a fundamental role in how the internet develops around the world, helping to provide faster, more reliable and cost-effective connections,” says David Basto, Information Technology project manager. “We work very closely with technology carriers and other broadband enablers to deliver better service for all of our citizens and start to bridge that inequity gap.”

The majority of IXs across the globe have a presence in only one location; the YYCIX is located in five locations around Calgary, made possible by The City’s extensive fibre network.

“When people are connected, they have the opportunity to be more engaged – in employment, education, and to one another,” concludes Monique. “This is a complex problem, but by building a collaborative, community approach we can ensure Calgarians have the hardware, access and digital literacy skills they need to fully engage and participate online. By increasing the participation rate of Calgarians in the workforce, in civic, social and recreational activities through connections to technology and information, we can include everyone in all that our city has to offer.”



INNOVATION HAPPENS HERE

Municipal governments around the world are being challenged to meet the needs of their citizens with greater accountability and transparency. Fiscal pressures and rapidly changing contexts mean that public servants must be equipped to adapt quickly to respond to the needs of citizens. Innovation, the process of creating value through trying something new, is essential to recognizing opportunities, responding to potential threats, and creating prosperity for all Calgarians. At The City of Calgary, our senior leaders are committed to building an organization of innovators by leveraging technology and encouraging experimentation, ingenuity, and a mindset for constant improvement.

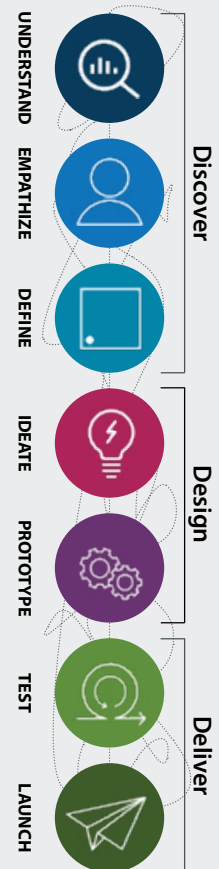
How are we able to use innovation at The City to improve the programs and services we deliver to Calgarians? The Innovation Lab is an internal resource to help realize The City's focus on innovation as part of Administration's [Rethink to Thrive](#) strategy. Through application of the Design Thinking methodology, the Innovation Lab works with City partners to transform programs, processes, and people.

Design Thinking – used by companies like AirBnB, Pinterest and Google – takes innovation best practices from multiple fields to create better customer experiences by deeply understanding human needs, exploring multiple ideas, and rapidly testing and prototyping solutions with users prior to launching solutions. The Innovation Lab has successfully applied the methodology in partnership with City business units to improve Council reports and understand community social and recreational needs.

"Innovation is the habit of always looking for new ways to make City services better, more equitable and impactful," says Erin Dumenko, Innovation Designer with the Innovation Lab. "We help empower City staff to work differently in a way that is human-centered. We do this by partnering with clients through complex challenges, testing and refining prototypes, building psychologically safer environments for project teams to collaborate, and finding creative ways to ensure people – the users of the service or process – remain front-and-centre in all the work we do. All of our services are geared towards building capacity to both create and sustain innovation across The City."

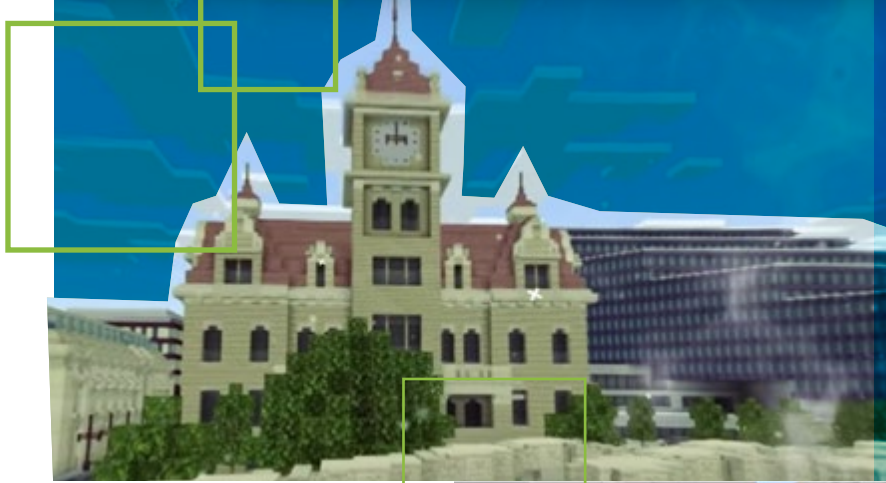
The Innovation Lab designs collaboration across City departments to solve some of Calgary's most important challenges.

[The Innovation Lab](#) shares best practices in innovation with City employees and teams. The Lab offers internal project consulting services to solve challenges, as well as employee training in creativity and innovation skills. The Lab also provides opportunities for staff to network with other innovative thinkers across the organization to build relationships and discover ways to collaborate.



NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

BUILDING CALGARY'S DOWNTOWN



Imagine a twin-towered hotel with snakes incorporated into the design. The CTrain runs through the lobby, adjacent to a pay-what-you-can marketplace. Maybe the buildings are linked to one another by a bridge and there is a dome on the top. How about the potential for a racetrack?



The hotel is the vision of Barrett, a Grade 2 student attending Riverside School in the Calgary community of Bridgeland. His hotel concept was created to house those Calgarians who don't have a roof over their heads free of charge.

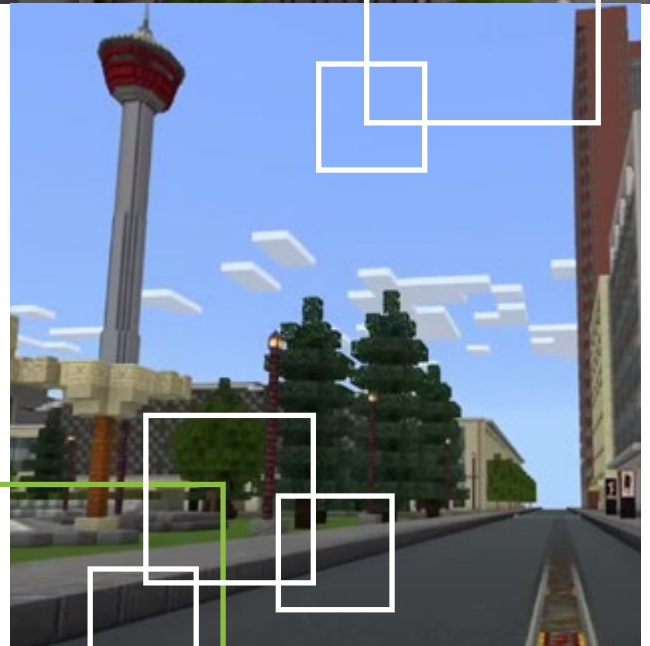
Barrett and hundreds of other students across Calgary are redesigning, restructuring, and rebuilding the city's downtown as part of Level Up, Calgary!, a design challenge that will bring pixels to life through Minecraft, a popular and critically acclaimed video game where players build environments in a blocky, 3D world. The challenge is a collaboration between the Calgary Board of Education (CBE), the Calgary Public Library, Microsoft Canada, and The City of Calgary's Downtown Strategy team.

Level Up, Calgary! using the Minecraft: Education Edition is the first student design challenge of its kind in Canada. Through the game, CBE students from all grade levels can visit the Central Library, explore Olympic Plaza, and interact with characters from the Indigenous community and experts from The City in a quest to answer the question 'How might we reimagine our public spaces to enrich the lives of Calgarians and strengthen our community?'

"People don't have places to live. It feels unfair, so this is somewhere to live for free," says Barrett, talking about his design. "I have included underground parking, but it is nice if people use the CTrain station. It will go through my building – there's a train station right in my building, kind of like the Library. But I want it to be more jazzy."

For The City, this partnership is an effort to connect with Calgary's youth and get them thinking about the challenges and opportunities the city's downtown is currently facing. This partnership with the CBE is a collaboration to bring a new viewpoint to the table.

City building is a priority of The City's [Downtown Strategy](#). The Downtown Strategy was launched in 2019 as an effort to bring together partners to tackle the issues and opportunities that downtown Calgary is facing to begin the downtown's reinvention.



Images courtesy Calgary Board of Education



To learn more about Level Up, Calgary!, please visit the [program website](#).

“It’s fun to use Minecraft at any time, but especially at school, that is really cool,” explains Barrett. “You get to learn on a video game and you don’t even know you are learning! And you don’t need to actually draw something... place blocks and blocks and blocks and you can imagine actually living in your building.”



**SEE MORE ABOUT
LEVEL UP CALGARY!**

[Play video](#)




Incorporated into the curriculum, students learn about The City’s Downtown Strategy and how it focuses on building a vibrant downtown and liveable communities. This includes learning about creating great public spaces, the efforts to support the downtown business community, making downtown a better place to live and visit, and how people, information, and ideas are connected. Students also have the opportunity to “speak” with virtual versions of downtown leaders to help solve challenges and create their designs. This includes former Mayor Naheed Nenshi, Blackfoot Elder Saa’kokoto, Kate Thompson, President and CEO of the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation, and members of The City’s Downtown Strategy team.

Once the Level Up, Calgary! challenge is complete, and winning entries announced in early 2022, The City will look at opportunities to recreate student designs around the downtown. This could mean building real-world examples of the designs or representing them visually around the downtown core.

Barrett’s mom Bekki says Barrett was very animated coming home from school with a watercolour of the Calgary skyline with silhouetted buildings, excitedly envisioning how he could change that skyline one day.

“When he first came home and told us about the Challenge, I thought ‘this can’t be right’ – that he might have a chance at having his building built? And I tried to downplay it,” laughs Bekki. “I thought it would maybe be a sketch or something, but then I actually looked at the details of the Challenge. He talks about it every day, talking about it with his older brother and what he is going to do next.”

For Bekki, the Challenge has been a very positive complement to Barrett’s learning. “They have been studying the [Calgary] skyline at school. He already loves the buildings downtown, so this was extra impactful for him. There’s a richness in bringing the learning into a 3D environment versus even just building with Lego and stuff, it’s just one step further. It just unlocks more imagination.” 

LOOK AHEAD

DECEMBER

[Zoolights](#)

To Jan 2

New Year's Eve, Dec 31

[City of Calgary Fireworks](#) –
Calgary Tower

Heritage Park [New Year's Eve Dinner](#)



JANUARY

[High Performance Rodeo](#)

Jan 17 – Feb 6

[Chinook Blast](#)

Jan 21-27

[BIG Winter Classic](#)

Jan 27-30

[Chinese Lunar New Year Festival](#)

Feb 28-30

FEBRUARY

[Glowfest](#)

Feb 10-12; 17-19

[YYC Hot Chocolate Fest](#)

Feb 1- Feb 28

[Immigrants of Distinction Awards](#)

Feb 24

[Midwinter Bluesfest](#)

last week of Feb

[Block Heater](#)

Feb 17-20

ANYTIME

[Development Map](#)

Stay informed about the developments in your neighbourhood and across The City.

[Backyard Firepit Safety](#)

Enjoy while following the guidelines and staying safe.

[Volunteer with The City of Calgary](#)

Experiences include Off-Leash Ambassadors, Animal Wellness Support, Adopt-A-Park, Tour Guides and more!



Enjoy the outdoors

- [Winter fire pits](#)
- [Outdoor skating rinks](#)
- [Toboggan hills](#)
- [Cross country ski and snowshoe tracks](#)
- Take a winter walk in our [parks](#) and [pathways](#)

This list is not exhaustive.



HAVE YOUR SAY



Climate Change Strategy and Action Plans

The City of Calgary Charter requires that Action Plans be reviewed and updated every five years. This engagement is supporting the upcoming updates with engagement opportunities for individual Calgarians, social service agencies working on the intersection of climate change and equity, and the business community.

Until Dec 27



Heritage Communities Local Area Plan

Online engagement. Through the local growth planning process, we'll work together to create a future vision for how land could be used and redeveloped in the area.

Until Jan 4



Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan

Online engagement. Through the local growth planning process, we'll work together to create a future vision for how land could be used and redeveloped in the area.

Until Jan 4

Neighbourhood Streets – Panorama Hills

Online engagement. As part of the Neighbourhood Streets Program, The City is working with the community to improve streets in Panorama Hills to enable all modes of transportation to safely travel throughout the community.

Jan 10 - Jan 24

Neighbourhood Streets – Dover

Online engagement. The City is working with the community of Dover to improve streets in the neighbourhood and create an inclusive mobile network for all community residents.

Jan 17 - Feb 4



Playgrounds - Building Accessible and Inclusive Play Spaces

Seeking feedback on playground builds to inform potential features in future designs.

Until Aug 31

Visit calgary.ca/engage to join the conversation.