

## **The District at Beltline - Submission For MUDA 2022, Urban Architecture**

### **‘Old Block, New Life, New Innovative Design’**

The District at Beltline (The District) is a revitalization of the former IBM Corporate Park. Originally built in the throes of a vibrant Calgary economy courtesy of a booming energy sector, it was sterile, three-building complex that lacked any real engagement with the surroundings and local community.

### **Creating Public Realm and a Meeting Space Like No Other**

Adjacent to bicycle routes and connected to Calgary’s brewery scene, the location was poised to become a new destination for bikers and food enthusiasts – a place where work meets community life.

The revitalization set out to create a new identity for the former corporate campus. One that considered the urban vibrancy of the local community and would thrive within the context of high office vacancy. The design intent was to create a new, experientially focused destination and increase foot traffic beyond 9-5.

The design at ground-level focuses on a street-to-street, activated extension of the Beltline community. One that incorporates new food experiences, a network of laneways and connected indoor and outdoor gathering places, transforming the buildings’ relationship with the site’s exterior spaces. People can spill out into these spaces, creating places for convergence and socialization.

The project took cues from the diversity and vibrancy of the Beltline neighbourhood by bringing in local operators and designing spaces that could be programmed year-round. The campus is quickly becoming the new nexus of Calgary’s brewing, arts and business hub. The spaces between the buildings have become a lively, growing network of meeting and mingling spots, each place with its own traits and personality to suit different tastes.

### **Unlocking Urban Potential Through Community**

There are amenities to be shared by tenants and public, such as Calgary’s only celebrity-chef driven food hall, sit-down restaurants, a gastropub, a microbrewery, an outdoor courtyard, a coffee shop, and patios designed for year-round use, accommodating Calgary’s winter climate. These amenities enhance interaction and make The District (and its tenants) a meaningful part of the community and broader urban fabric of the Beltline.

The District embraces public art and we sought out opportunities to make the building uniquely identifiable. The developer engaged an artist to re-imagine the look and feel through a series of 60-foot-high, Calgary-centric, street art installations on each of the three buildings. This public art feature of each building sets the stage for an unforgettable first impression and, fully embodies the lively and inviting ‘vibe’ that has become well-known at The District.

Overall, the new design provides the opportunity for creative clustering. Intimate laneways, a lively food hall and the convergence of workplace culture all play their part in creating an atmosphere for chance encounters, informal meetings, and continual discovery.

The approach we took with The District became a new Calgary benchmark for how urban spaces can be used in the future. The result is a project that has helped redefine the purpose of the office, is succeeding in bringing people back to the downtown and catalyzing community within the neighbourhood.