



## Sustainable Calgary

September 28, 2018

201, 1225A Kensington Road  
Calgary, Alberta T2N 038

Dear Councilor,

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, Sustainable Calgary held a symposium with 30 people in attendance, including students, professionals in design, planning and social services, and members of the communities with which we've worked through our Active Neighbourhoods Canada program. As part of the event, we asked participants what they would like the City to prioritize in the 2019-2022 Budget. Here's what we heard:

- **Invest in a Visionary Budget:** The City of Calgary is second-to-none when it comes to developing strong visions for the future of the City. We support a budget that enables the implementation of these visions! This includes plans and policies such as the Step Forward Pedestrian Strategy, the Age-Friendly Strategy, the Climate Resilience Plan and the Municipal Development Plan. Key in these documents are commitments to building for the future: building a City for all ages and stages, and building a City of complete communities, with access to food, housing, transportation, employment and education.
- **Invest Now, For Later:** Often we think of budgets in terms of line items. But there are two sides to any balance sheet. *How much can the City save by investing in our future, now?*
- **Spend Differently:** Working towards our aspirations as a city doesn't have to be more expensive – in fact sometimes *not changing* is expensive. We have a choice to spend differently, to prioritize our aspirations, and to invest in actions with cross-cutting benefits. Subsidizing transit tickets, for example, while targeted at income inequality, incentivizes transit ridership, which can spin off into a traffic management strategy, a climate change strategy and a public health strategy. Let's aspire to make more investments with such far-reaching benefits.
- **Prioritize Active Modes of transportation and Transit:** Investing in active modes and in transit contributes to better health outcomes, happiness outcomes, environmental outcomes, and in commercial districts, better economic outcomes. Cities with strong transit systems get citizens to work on time, thrive economically and benefit all residents. Investments therein are among the most impactful the City of Calgary could make.
- **Support the development of new Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP):** Set aside appropriate funding for the creation of new ARPs, to ensure they are developed to be relevant for their communities, for the City, and for future development and developers; and to ensure they create accountability to a shared vision.
- **Support Established Communities:** Sustainable Calgary has worked with three established communities as part of its Active Neighbourhoods Canada program: Acadia, Bridgeland, and Marlborough. During extensive consultations, members of each of these communities have expressed a wish to attract new investment from developers, so that they can offer more diversity in housing options, create gentle density, and compete with less desirable forms of

investment. Investments in public infrastructure in established communities, alongside of zoning changes, can be a powerful catalyst for attracting private investment, while also supporting the densification goals of the Municipal Development Plan. In addition, communities would like to improve their liveability, and reap the positive impacts that communities designed with health in mind can have for children, seniors, persons on low incomes, and all Calgarians. Investments in safe roads, walkable infrastructure, sidewalk repairs, pathway connectivity and place-making are examples of investments that would revitalize existing neighbourhoods.

- **Invest in Snow Removal:** Throughout the summer, we continued to hear that this is one of the biggest barriers to mobility in Calgary. Spinoff effects include sedentary behaviour among Calgarians, feelings of isolation among seniors and persons with mobility impairments, increased health care costs due to injury, decreased productivity, and as-of-yet unquantified impacts to tourism spending, in a City that captures 25% of Alberta's overnight hotel stays. Thank you for your increased investment this coming winter!
- **Invest in Affordable Housing:** We support continued collaboration with affordable housing providers and private developers to increase the stock of affordable and appropriate housing in Calgary, and we support the contribution of land assets for affordable housing in the form of land trusts. We encourage prioritizing affordable housing in complete, walkable communities that offer access to housing, food, employment, schools and transportation.
- **Invest in Climate Change abatement.** The most impactful changes a City can make with regard to climate change are related to urban form and transportation. By creating compact, walkable cities, and creating attractive public transportation options, the City can make substantial strides towards decreasing its carbon footprint. This does not necessarily mean spending more. This can mean making zoning changes that attract different kinds of investment; and it can mean choosing to spend differently, by prioritizing public and active transportation.

This feedback from symposium participants on September 5<sup>th</sup> aligns with the City of Calgary's Action Plan and stated priorities around age-friendly infrastructure, active transportation, and transit. Research spanning health, engineering, environment, economy and psychology tells us that we're all on the right track. Nike's 2015 publication "Designed to Move" summarizes 521 academic findings across 17 countries on the benefits of investing in active transportation infrastructure. In 2017, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Dr. Theresa Tam, dedicated her first publication to the topic of designing healthy cities. Just weeks ago, the Canadian Institute of Planners released a draft of their new Healthy Communities policy, which acknowledges the key role that planners have in contributing to public health, through decisions on land use and development patterns, zoning, and design standards. Research and best practices point in a clear direction. So do our priorities as a City. Let's turn our inspiring visions into reality!

Sincerely,



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