

EVDS 702 PROJECT PROPOSAL

Project Title

District Identification Competition for Calgary's Downtown Cultural District

Proposers

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Client

Calgary Performing Arts Centre, representing a downtown cultural district alliance that includes the Glenbow, Telus Convention Centre, City Hall, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Marriott Hotel, CUPS, Cathedral Church of the Redeemer, Calgary Public Library, Burns Building, Teatro.

Areas of Interest

Industrial design, environmental analysis, collaborative urban design, policy development.

Project Description

Design a system of identification to demarcate the core area (first phase) of Calgary's downtown cultural district, a hub neighbourhood physically characterized by large public structures (a library, museum, performing arts center, city hall, convention center and Calgary's main public plaza). Whereas signage and street furniture have traditionally been associated with district identification, this project encourages conceptually innovative solutions. Consider in particular the period of time between 5-8PM, which bridges the gap between the time when most people leave downtown (5PM) and evening showtimes (7-30-8PM).

Intentions

§ To unite diverse elements into a cohesive, legible neighbourhood (strong sense of place);

§ To clarify and exemplify the distinct character of the district;

§ To explore innovative urban design options in an area that is approaching full land coverage, and where replacement of current infrastructure is unlikely (although renovation of existing structures is already being considered);

§ To rouse public interest in the neighbourhood and the development plan;

§ To advance and consolidate a new urban planning method, which utilizes a graphic system that is readily comprehensible by experts and lay people, incorporates input and analysis by experts in many fields, and is open to long-term evolution;

§ To base all concepts on attributes unique to Calgary (social, physical and environmental).

Issues

§ In the mid-1970s, before the Convention Centre, Olympic Plaza, Municipal Building, Performing Arts Centre and C-Train system were built, the City commissioned a planning study. The resulting proposal was a civic centre plan, a design for a new "heart of the city". While development is complete for all intents and purposes, the area has not become the attraction it was intended to be.

§ Integrity, long-term sustainability and evolutionary potential are vital considerations.

§ This public area belongs to all Calgarians. It should reflect the character of the city and invite use by all Calgarians.

Client Issues

§ Limited funds; success at this stage may lead to improved funding for future phases. Cost of implementation should not exceed \$150,000 in the first year.

§ Arts-related development, and development that demonstrates the value of creative thinking, is encouraged.

§ Because the primary use of the district is not office/retail, it is recommended that particular consideration be given to the function of the area in non-business hours (evenings and weekends, particularly 5 to 8PM) during all four seasons of the year.

§ Multidisciplinary team-building and collaboration with experts

in other fields are encouraged (arts-related experts such as sculptors, performers, stage designers and so on as well as historians, environmentalists etc.).

Other Relevant Information

§ Geographical area under consideration: the 5 block area bounded by Centre St, 9th Ave SE, 7th Ave SE, and the Calgary Municipal Building (and adjacent public buildings).

§ A plan for a cultural hub in this district is currently being researched and developed. The case study being compiled is based on district maps that accommodate multiple layers of information. All graphics must be compatible with this system.

§ Current development that will affect the character of the district in question: ongoing upgrading and marketing of Stephen Avenue Walk historic district, East Village residential development, development of the northwest corner of Olympic Plaza, C-Train station refurbishing on 7th Avenue, possible re-use of the CP Rail lands.

Alternative Project Proposals

§ Identify the key issues in the development of this area as (a) a neighbourhood and (b) a cultural hub, and design a district identification competition suitable as a first public initiative by the neighbourhood alliance.

§ Prepare a long-term neighbourhood development plan including a statement of principles, policy guidelines and project management structure.