



NEIGHBOURHOODS
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ASSOCIATION

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The Central Railway Station
Revival AND Free Transit is the
Ticket PLUS Community Gardens
& the Beltline THEN Answering
the Call of the (Urban) Wild ALSO
Re-imagining 10th Street for
Kids PLUS Why City Council Must
Ban Gas Leaf Blowers

Plus: How Thrift
Shopping
Reduces Your
Environmental
Footprint

Show us your
Beltline! (Not
that one).
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photos about
this issue can
be sent to us
via our social
channels.

What's going
on at the
McHugh House

ALL EVENTS
POSTPONED

What Should Climate Action Look Like in Calgary?

In November of last year, Calgary's newly elected City Council voted overwhelmingly to declare a climate emergency. As the first major move by this new Council, it stands as an important signal that the city must no longer ignore the climate impacts of its decisions. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, cities like Calgary have influence over roughly 50% of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. The soaring cost of more frequent and more severe floods, droughts and extreme weather have made it abundantly clear that the cost of not acting in the long run will far outweigh the costs of taking action now.

In this Summer/Fall 2022 issue of the Beltlandian, we look to the direct actions we can take in Calgary to boldly tackle climate change. Nathaniel Schmidt shines a light on the importance of protecting biodiversity in the city (pg 4).

Although we all love escaping the city for the nearby mountains, it's hard to not feel a tinge of guilt contributing further GHG emissions driving out on the Transcanada Highway. With recent talk of revived Banff-Calgary passenger rail service, Justin Simaluk and Willem Klumpenhauer explore the best location for a central railway station in Downtown Calgary (pg 2).

Speaking of less car traffic, Sustainable Calgary is spearheading an exciting open streets project on 10th Street SW beside Connaught School that will reclaim more public space in the Beltline for people. Lucia Blanco with Sustainable Calgary shares a preview in this issue (pg 5).

There are plenty of other exciting green initiatives afoot in the Beltline, including community gardens (pg. 4) and the new WINS thrift shop and donation centre on 11th Avenue.

Lastly, we're not going to tackle climate change by tinkering in the margins. It's time for immediate action. Free transit (pg. 3) would be a good start and banning gas leaf blowers (pg. 6) might just give us back the simple joy of hearing the birds sing each day.



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How Thrift Shopping Reduces Your Environmental Footprint

Is one of your intentions for 2022 to reduce your environmental impact? An often overlooked way of practicing sustainability in your everyday life is shopping thrift. This simple choice has benefits that go far beyond keeping more money in your pocket.

THE POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SHOPPING AT WINS

Contribute to the reduction of energy consumption, air pollution, waste in landfills and keep our oceans cleaner by shopping thrift fashion. Fashion production makes up 10% of humanity's carbon emissions, dries up water sources, and pollutes rivers and streams. WINS' work as a charity thrift retailer in Calgary is driven by a commitment to the environment and the repurposing, recycling and upcycling of gently used clothing and household items. Last year, WINS rehomed, repurposed and/or recycled over 3.3 million pounds of clothing and items.

SHOP THRIFT EASIER THAN EVER

Show your love for fashion and develop your personal style when you shop thrift. With endless options and six WINS Thrift Store locations across Calgary and Twice New by WINS, a curated thrift fashion box delivered across Canada, it's easier than ever to be kind to Mother Earth.

REFRESH YOUR CLOSET

The new year is the perfect time to organize your wardrobe. Have preloved items that you no longer need? Drop them off at any WINS Thrift Store location and support your community and the environment. Transform your gently used items into resources and support for Calgarian women and their families.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT WINSYYC.CA AND FOLLOW @WINSYYC ON SOCIAL.

Central Railway Station Revival is Ticket to a Vibrant and Sustainable Calgary



After over three decades of slumber, Calgary's downtown railway station may soon see regular use.

Two proposed rail projects for the Calgary region include: A train service connecting Banff with Calgary and the Calgary International Airport, and Prairie Link, a high-speed rail connection between Calgary and Edmonton which could potentially supply regional service from Airdrie to the Calgary core.

In the not-so-distant future, Calgarians may be looking at regular passenger rail service connecting them to the mountains, surrounding communities, and the city of Edmonton.

Next time you're out for a walk in the community, look up. It's a rare moment in time and it won't last forever. We're all at home, and I promise, it's heartening to see.

Both plans are in early stages, and given that both are privately-funded (so far) they are light on details. Nevertheless, one thing is very clear: Both rail projects will have to have a stop in downtown Calgary.

This puts Calgary's downtown railway station — situated at the foot of the Calgary Tower and Palliser Hotel — in a position to become a vital economic and sustainable transportation hub for the city.

Proposed Regional and Intercity Rail Connections Around Calgary

REIMAGINING A DOWNTOWN SPACE

The Calgary Tower was previously used as a railway station by Via Rail up until 1990 for its Canadian train between Vancouver and Toronto. It was also used for a Calgary-South Edmonton Dayliner train service which ended in 1985.

Today, it is generally used for storage and empty offices, a bygone relic of 70s era planning and urban decay. A train station at the core of Calgary's downtown — serving visitors and workers alike — would bring life back to this important downtown landmark. Calgary's greater downtown plan puts an emphasis on activating underused spaces and places, expanding transit for all and creating vibrant safe streets for pedestrians. There is revitalization potential from this Tower station: Railway stations draw businesses and other services into the downtown core and can help boost activity downtown and in the Beltline, which in turn leads to higher occupancy and use, which in turn leads to improved property values, which also leads to income for the city.

LAST MILE MOBILITY

With two converging rail lines, Calgary's downtown is set to become an important transit connection both locally and regionally. A well-placed downtown station should minimize transfer times to other important routes and act as a catalyst for downtown development and revitalization. This means that passengers who use the train should arrive in downtown Calgary close to their destinations.

When Calgary starts operating regional transit in the metropolitan area, it will be important that these commuters don't need to resort to taxis or Ubers when they reach the city. Connectivity will be key to ensuring that these systems all work together to provide the region with well-served transit and walkable destinations.

THE RAIL RENAISSANCE

The transportation sector impacts on a variety of climate initiatives including: net zero, suburban sprawl, sustainable development, emissions reductions. One of the largest social experiments of the 20th century included building cities to support personal motor vehicle use, instead of designing them for the people who live there. We're now starting to realize the mistake of sacrificing our city space

and safety to automobiles, which will take a long time to correct. Other countries corrected this years ago and we're only now starting to catch up.

Providing Calgarians a safe and sustainable way to travel to the mountains and capitalizing on the redevelopment that comes with it, is a first step to changing travel in the region. The world is advancing rail travel and Calgary is poised to become a centre for it once again. A rail renaissance is happening — let's make sure we stay on the right track.

→ **BY JUSTIN SIMALUK AND
WILLEM KLUMPENHOUWER**



Free Transit is the Ticket to a Sustainable Calgary Infrastructure



Calgary Transit rang in the new year by increasing fares in 2022. A single adult trip now costs ten cents more (\$3.60) and a youth trip is five cents more (\$2.45). Finding an extra dime might seem like a minor inconvenience in hunting through couch cushions, but those dimes add up. At best, you're minimizing your exposure to the per-trip increase by buying a bus pass that costs \$3.00 more per month.

Meanwhile, the cost for vehicle owners to park on the street not only didn't go up by \$36 this year, but it's still completely free in most instances. Let's use a comparison of these two City-operated mobility services to explore one simple-yet-transformative idea: making all transit in Calgary fare-free.

PARKING HAS IT GOOD

In the majority of the city, anyone can park their car on the street for free. In some places this free parking is limited to an hour or two to prevent long term parking, but nearby residents can apply for a zero-cost pass to overcome this limitation.

There are some neighbourhoods that have collected signatures to get street parking restricted to those who live nearby (think of no parking signs with "except by permit X"). Both the application process to establish these restricted parking zones and obtaining the accompanying passes annually (including visitor permits) is entirely free.

Even in those inner-city locations with paid on-street parking, it is free on evenings and weekends. If you don't pay to park in these zones when it's required, you're risking the chance of a \$75 ticket that is reduced to \$40 if paid promptly.

TRANSIT, NOT SO MUCH

Start comparing these non-costs of parking private vehicles on public space to the rising costs of riding public transit, and things don't line up.

The only area with free use of Calgary Transit is on the C-Train along 7th Avenue. Children five-and-under can ride for free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult. Otherwise, it doesn't matter the time of day, how short the trip, or whether you're taking part in the free parking bonanza – everyone is required to pay to use this mobility service. Even the poorest Calgarians don't get to ride transit for free, instead paying a reduced cost for the Low Income Transit Pass each month.

If you decide to risk your chances and hop on transit without paying a fare, the ticket is \$250 with an option to be reduced to \$150 if paid promptly. These hefty fines look especially off kilter when you consider the person who skipped on the \$3.60 for transit cost the City less than the parking revenues lost to warrant a \$75 ticket.

TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND STRATEGY

The Municipal Development Plan / Calgary Transportation Plan (MDP/CTP) outlines policy and planning direction to create an economic, social, and environmentally sustainable city over

the next fifty years. Its main mobility goal is "to develop an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that supports land use, provides increased mobility choices for citizens, promotes vibrant, connected communities, protects the natural environment, and supports a prosperous and competitive economy."

When considering how people move around the city, the MDP/CTP recognizes personal vehicle use needs to decrease from 74% down to 55-65% while transit use needs to double to 15-20% of all total trips (walking/wheeling making up the difference). But how are these numbers to be achieved when City Hall incentivizes driving with free parking while raising the rates to ride transit?

In fact, when you start to consider other recent strategies for things like downtown revitalization and climate resilience, raising the price to ride transit is an operational decision that stands in stark contrast to the city we've stated we want to be.

IMAGINING A BETTER FUTURE

The pandemic provides an opportunity to reimagine how people move around our city. What if we used this opportunity to align mobility incentives with the City's long-term strategic goals?

Considering all the benefits to equity, climate, families, tourism, road congestion, and poverty reduction, making transit fare-free in Calgary is one of the best ways City Hall can build the resilient, sustainable future we all want.

→ **BY MYKE ATKINSON**

Current & Future Travel Choices

FROM THE CALGARY
TRANSPORTATION PLAN

WALK OR WHEELING

2017

18%



FUTURE

20-25%

TRANSIT

8%



15-20%

VEHICLES

74%



55-65%



Community Gardens & the Beltline

Community gardening is becoming an increasingly popular movement in urban-ized areas across the country.

Community gardens are places where people can come together to nurture, develop, and sustain a growing space in their neighbourhood. In urban areas, residents living in apartments, condominiums or townhouses often find they do not have space to grow their own food. Community gardens can provide space for community members to grow fruits and vegetables, which can transform a concrete jungle into an “edible city”.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

There are many benefits to having a community garden in your neighbourhood. They allow the community to connect with each other, grow healthy, pesticide-free produce, and can have a positive impact on mental health by allowing access to nature and greenspace in an urban environment. This is especially important during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as they can offer a safe outdoor gathering space for people to enjoy. Furthermore, locally shared gardens contribute to biodiversity by providing food and habitat for a variety of urban wildlife species, such as pollinators. They strengthen local food security, reduce food miles, and create a more sustainable system. By increasing permeable surface area within the urban fabric, community gardens can improve water infiltration in the city, benefiting stormwater systems and reducing the urban heat island effect (cooling effect on the micro-climate).

BELTLINE COMMUNITY GARDEN

In Calgary, community gardens are valued and supported by the municipality and are often established on public lands. There are approximately 150 community gardens in Calgary, but there are currently none within the Beltline itself. The Beltline Neighbourhood Association has established a volunteer-based Community Garden Team to find an appropriate location and establish a garden in the Beltline. Though the location is yet to be determined, the garden will offer residents a place to connect with fellow community members and to learn how to grow their own food.

→ **BY HAILEY BLOOM**

Answering the Call of the (Urban) Wild

Living in Calgary, the vast wilderness of the Rockies is a short drive away. But right outside our front doors here in the city, there’s a thriving urban wilderness waiting to be discovered. In fact, a recent report in the Globe and Mail showed Calgary has the most greenspace per 1000 residents of any major city in Canada. Within this greenspace is a rich world of biodiversity that enriches our city and also our lives.

So one winter morning, I hopped on my bike to explore some of this greenspace along Calgary’s two rivers, the Elbow and the Bow. These waters and the surrounding habitat – referred to as riparian areas – are full of biodiversity and hold no shortage of surprises.

My journey begins just below the walls of the Glenmore Dam on the Elbow River, an area uniquely able to support an abundance of wildlife year-round because the shallow waters are kept ice free by waterflow created by the dam. The

highlight of my morning comes early as I spot an American Mink diving in the river less than 300 metres from me. It’s amazing that this animal is able to survive and thrive so close to so much human activity. As I continue along the Elbow downtown, nature keeps



← MALLARD

showing up. Ravens play in the drafts above Holy Cross and mallards come in for a landing at Central Memorial park.

The Elbow ends as it meets the Bow and I head to St. Patrick’s island, which quickly plucks me from the concrete of downtown and places me amongst huge balsam poplars and ruby red dogwoods. I hear the calls of white breasted nuthatches and downy



← WHITE BREASTED NUTHATCH

woodpeckers alongside happy sounds of children tobogganing down the Rise. My journey ends at Prince’s Island where mallards and goldeneyes mix in ponds. In warmer months you might even be able to spot beavers and muskrats in view of the skyscrapers of downtown.

The more we interact with these

areas, the more insight we gain into their value. What starts as a leisure activity can expand into knowledge of everything that supports biodiversity in our ecosystems.

Appreciating this can be more than just a spectator sport and one of the easiest ways to participate is through citizen science.

With the help of apps like eBird and iNaturalist, you can be a direct participant in helping experts track wildlife through the data you collect. Awareness of our responsibility in caring for these areas is also important. This could be as simple as leashing your dog, staying on designated trails, and always keeping your distance.

When you begin to open up to the biodiversity around you, the city becomes a much bigger place that is more than just human activity. It is an ecosystem that supports life. The more we begin to connect with and respect this, the healthier this shared ecosystem becomes for us all.

→ **BY NATHANIEL SCHMIDT**



← AMERICAN MINK



→ GOLDENEYE



→ DOWNY WOODPECKER



← RAVEN



→ BEAVER



IMAGE: LUCIA BLANCO

Re-imagining 10th Street for Kids!

05

In May of 2021, a proposal to transform 10 St SW was envisioned by a group of Grade 4 students. The street is located along the medium-sized play area and staff parking lot of Connaught School in the Beltline.

Our neighbourhood is one of the densest and most historic communities in Calgary and currently deals with a high demand for public and open spaces, suffering from a low square footage per capita of park space.

According to students' observations and experiences on their daily commutes to school, their streets are unsafe, congested and often people drive too fast in the area. For these students and their parents, pick-ups and drop-offs at school are stressful moments of their days as pedestrian intersections are not always easy to cross. These citizens mentioned a particular concern for 10 St SW regarding reckless drivers and illegal parking and expressed a preference for crossing diagonally instead of using the street's crosswalks.

In order to improve these situations, students proposed closing 10 St SW permanently, opening it only for pedestrians to make it safer, stating "We want to close the street forever and always!". Their ideas include removing the fence of the play area to extend it into the street, adding slides, climbing structures, swings and vegetation in spaces currently dedicated to cars. Some suggested

adding landscape design elements such as a shallow pond with stepping stones, multicoloured painted bike lanes with vegetation to separate them from sidewalks, and ramps/humps to make them fun to walk and bike on.

In the coming months, Sustainable Calgary will implement student design proposals through tactical urbanism, to temporarily improve their street while providing playful and social experiences for the school community. We hope this project will help prioritize more environmentally conscious and participatory initiatives for the design and transformation of Calgary's streetscapes and begin the process of scaling these prototypes into permanent green infrastructure where children can freely and safely navigate their city.

If you'd like to contribute to this project, donations can be made to Sustainable Calgary through Canada Helps with a note labeling your donation "Connaught".

→ **BY LUCIA BLANCO, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE STUDENT WITH SUSTAINABLE CALGARY**



WANT THE INSIDE SCOOP? HERE'S A SUMMARY OF THE KEY FEATURES:

- 1 Ramps to provide more playful opportunities while biking to school.
- 2 Modular and movable equipment for resting.
- 3 Ground mural to demarcate layout of the new space.
- 4 Boulders to close the street.
- 5 Planter boxes with pollinator gardens.

The design proposal was created during the co-design sessions of Stepping Towards a Greener Tomorrow (STGT), a project developed by Sustainable Calgary in collaboration with Ever Active Schools and with the support of Liveable Streets. It focuses on temporary interventions to improve daily travel routes to school for students in three very different, and growing, neighbourhoods. The project promotes the use of active transportation modes such as walking or biking that reduce air pollution. Personal vehicles are the largest source of air pollution in the city and account for 34% of Calgary's greenhouse gases.

El Diablow: Why City Council Must Ban Gas Leaf Blowers

Gas leaf blowers are a major contributor to climate change

In California, which recently signed a new law banning gas powered lawn equipment, it is estimated that the pollution from small gas powered equipment like leaf blowers now contributes double the smog-forming emissions of all the state's 14.4-million passenger vehicles.

The pollution from gas powered leaf blowers is breathtakingly high. According to a study by Edmunds, the hydrocarbon emissions from a half-hour of yard work with a two-stroke leaf blower are equivalent to a 6,200-km drive from Texas to Alaska in a 6,200-pound Ford F-150 Raptor.

THE INCREASING DRONE OF NOISE GAS LEAF BLOWERS IS REDUCING QUALITY OF LIFE AND PRODUCTIVITY IN CALGARY

Gas leaf blowers produce upwards of 100-decibels of wall-penetrating noise - levels equivalent to a plane taking off. Yet in the City of Calgary they are legally permitted to be used any time day or night within 48-hours of snowfall. The result of their round the clock constant droning noise is lost sleep, reduced productivity (especially while more Calgarians are working from home), cardiovascular disease and even an impairment in the cognitive performance of schoolchildren. In all, the cacophony of noise generated by gas powered leaf blowers impacts the quality of life and mental health of all the city's 1.3-million residents.

POLLUTION SPEWED BY GAS LEAF BLOWERS IS INCREASING THE RISK OF LUNG CANCER, ASTHMA, PREMATURE BIRTH AND OTHER LIFE-THREATENING CONDITIONS FOR CALGARIANS

Gas leaf blowers are not just a nuisance and menace to our climate, they are a direct threat to our health. The excessive pollutants from these machines are proven to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections. While the dust they stir up can contain "pollen, mold, animal feces, heavy metals and chemicals from herbicides and pesticides"

CITIES ACROSS NORTH AMERICA ARE BANNING GAS LEAF BLOWERS

More than 100 cities across the United States have already passed regulations to ban or restrict gas leaf blowers. In 2021, Toronto City Council approved a motion to study the

feasibility of a ban. In Ottawa, the National Capital Commission that looks after the capital parks and buildings has banned the use of gas-powered leaf blowers starting in April 2023 and the rest of the city is not far behind. In parts of Vancouver, a noise bylaw forbids the use of gas-powered leaf blowers within 50 metres of any residence during specific times. In January, Vancouver City Council unanimously passed a motion to phase out gas-powered lawn maintenance equipment, including leaf blowers for personal and commercial use by 2024.

CALGARY CITY COUNCIL MUST ACT ON THEIR DECLARATION OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY

In November 2021, Calgary City Council voted overwhelmingly to declare a climate emergency. Mayor Gondek was quoted "It is a matter of making sure that we understand the reality of the table stakes that are declaring a climate emergency, so we can actually attract capital and talent here."

Ward 9 Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra said that the emergency declaration "really sets us up for a meaningful statement about how climate resilience and a declaration of a climate emergency is critical to our city, to our province, to our country, to the world at this point in time." According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, cities account for roughly half of all greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

"Gas leaf blowers produce upwards of 100-decibels of wall-penetrating noise - levels equivalent to a plane taking off."

Calgary City Council must make good on their Climate Emergency declaration and take immediate action on banning this source of significant pollution and excessive noise that is completely avoidable and within our control as a city.

→ **BY PROJECT CALGARY**



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- civilization as we know it
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