



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ceremonial groundbreaking signals construction start on Olympic Plaza Transformation

The reimagined cultural gathering place in the heart of Calgary's downtown core will be completed alongside the Werklund Centre Transformation Expansion in 2028

May 28, 2026 – Calgary, AB – Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), Werklund Centre and The City of Calgary officially broke ground on the Olympic Plaza Transformation project (OPT), marking a major milestone on the revitalization of one of Calgary's most well-known public spaces. While construction has been underway on the Werklund Centre Transformation (WCT) Expansion on the west end of the site since January 2025, today's announcement officially marks the start of construction on the plaza itself.

"CMLC and our partners are thrilled to begin construction on such an important project in the heart of our city," said Kate Thompson, President & CEO of CMLC. "Today marks the next chapter of this beloved but aging urban plaza, one where we see the space transformed into a modern, vibrant and inclusive space for Calgarians and visitors to enjoy for generations to come. We look forward to building on the momentum of our downtown's revitalization as we realize this exciting new era for Calgary's Olympic Plaza."

OPT, along with the Werklund Centre Transformation (WCT) Expansion and future modernization of the existing Werklund Centre facility, is part of a broader initiative to revitalize two key blocks of Calgary's downtown into one of Canada's most vibrant artistic, cultural and civic destinations.

"The Olympic Plaza Transformation project is fundamental to our vision for the future of the Werklund Centre campus and for downtown Calgary more broadly," said Alex Sarian, President & CEO of Werklund Centre. "What excites us most is the opportunity to broaden the definition of what a cultural experience can be: extending creativity, performance, learning, celebration, and community gathering beyond our walls and into the public realm. As a year-round, accessible public space, Olympic Plaza will create new ways for Calgarians and visitors alike to experience the city, encounter one another, and engage with culture as part of everyday life."

The transformed Olympic Plaza will feature a new pavilion with a food and beverage offering and public washrooms on its eastern edge, and a new green space on the northern edge. The plaza will be bordered on the west by the first phase of the Werklund Centre Transformation, the WCT Expansion, a new 170,000 square foot theatre facility currently under construction, which houses the Osten-Victor Playhouse, and the 200-seat studio theatre.

"Olympic Plaza has long been a place for celebration and connection in the heart of Calgary, and today's groundbreaking marks an exciting step toward its next chapter," said Minister for Arts,

Culture and Status of Women Tanya Fir. “Alberta’s government is proud to invest \$103 million in this revitalization, helping create a vibrant, accessible and welcoming public space that supports artists, attracts visitors, drives economic activity and creates jobs. Together with Werklund Centre, this project will strengthen downtown Calgary and create even more opportunities to experience Alberta’s vibrant arts and culture community.”

The revitalized plaza will be an accessible space with flexibility and infrastructure to support a range of day-to-day uses as a public gathering space as well as markets, programs, major events of up to 5,000 people and, in the winter, a skating rink.

“Thriving cities have vibrant downtown cores that are not just places of business, but places where people come to explore, experience city life and partake in arts and culture activities,” said Mayor Jeromy Farkas. “Olympic Plaza is the heart of our downtown, and combined with the Werklund Centre Transformation and the many other investments The City of Calgary is making into the area, will help drive the revitalization of Calgary’s downtown.”

OPT was designed by design team gh3 Architecture, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture; CCxA Landscape Architecture and Urban Design; and Belleville Placemaking, and is being delivered by project manager Colliers and construction manager EllisDon.

Elements from the plaza’s Olympic legacy will be thoughtfully woven into the plaza’s design, including the integration of one of Calgary’s 1988 Olympic cauldrons and the Latin phrase "Citius, Altius, Fortius" ("Faster, Higher, Stronger) incorporated onto the arches on the plaza’s north edge. A striking 12-metre-tall central feature will also reflect shape of the ‘sunflake’, the official emblem of the 1988 Olympic Winter Games.

The Olympic Plaza Transformation and the Werklund Centre Transformation projects are part of a generational investment in Calgary’s premiere performing arts centre, and a vital component of The City of Calgary’s downtown revitalization strategy. Efforts are underway to secure funding required for the final phase of the campus transformation —the modernization of the existing Werklund Centre facility.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Julie Yepishina-Geller, Sr. Manager of Communications
Calgary Municipal Land Corporation
jygeller@calgarymlca.ca
403-512-5108

About CMLC

CMLC is Calgary's go-to city-building placemaker. In 2007, The City of Calgary created CMLC to kick-start Calgary's urban renewal by revitalizing the Rivers District—504 acres on downtown's east end, including East Village and Calgary's emerging Culture + Entertainment District. In 2025, we broadened our boundaries to bring everything we've learned about planning, placemaking and executing great places to new neighbourhoods and a new city-building opportunity—Transit-Oriented Communities.

CMLC has also delivered \$1 billion in major projects, including the new Central Library, the BMO Centre Expansion, the Platform Innovation Centre & Parkade, and the 17 Ave S.E. Extension and Victoria Park/Stampede Station Rebuild. CMLC is currently leading the delivery of the Werklund Centre and Olympic Plaza Transformation projects. Through mindful master-planning, creative placemaking and bold city-building ventures, we're transforming Calgary into one of the world's most livable and lovable cities.

About Werklund Centre

Werklund Centre is the steward of Western Canada's largest arts centre and the artistic and civic cornerstone of Calgary's downtown core that fosters the arts through live performance, educational opportunities, and artist development programs. For 40 years, it has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians—a commitment that is being renewed through the Werklund Centre Transformation project, the largest cultural infrastructure project in Canadian history. It is home to five resident companies, including Alberta Theatre Projects, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, Theatre Calgary, and One Yellow Rabbit. It houses six gallery spaces, five theatres, a concert hall, rehearsal and education spaces, costume and scene shops, and a restaurant.