

TRELLIS SOCIETY – BOWNESS HOUSING – A NEW HOME FOR FAMILIES

6623 Bowness Road NW

What We Heard Report

September 2024



Background

Trellis Society (“Trellis”) is a registered non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families and children in Calgary. Formed from the merger of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary and Aspen Family & Community Network Society in 2020, Trellis aims to provide comprehensive services that help people grow and flourish in all areas of their lives. We work to support those affected by homelessness, poverty, social isolation and other challenges.

Trellis has a strong presence in Bowness, with many staff members living and working in the community. The Bowness Hub provides programs and activities for youth and children. Our people and programs are here to help individuals and families grow stronger together because we know strong relationships and supports are critical to people’s success and wellbeing. Trellis helps empower individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences to get the support they need. We operate family and community hubs, run Calgary’s only emergency shelter for youth, offer preschool and afterschool programming, stay-in-school programs, employment training, therapy, and support people of all ages to find and maintain stable housing. Our goal is to grow in providing better and more comprehensive supports to the community.

Trellis offers:

- Children & Youth Supports: providing a lifeline for young people, offering safe havens, enriching activities, and essential life skills training. These initiatives empower youth ages 6 to 17 to overcome challenges, build confidence, and envision a brighter future.
- Family Supports: are a cornerstone for families in need offering community hubs, emergency and immediate assistance, and support networks. These programs offer a lifeline, helping families navigate challenges and stay together.
- Indigenous Initiatives: Trellis honours and celebrates Indigenous heritage and culture through specialized programs and community events. These efforts nurture connections, foster healing, and strengthen community bonds.
- Housing Support: Trellis’ Sustainable Families Program provides a lifeline for families and individuals facing homelessness. The support aims to find secure, stable housing to empower people to rebuild their lives and achieve lasting stability.

Trellis operates in all quadrants of the city, with our headquarters currently located in Vista Heights. Trellis and our predecessors have operated in Bowness since 1976 and are proud of the work done by the Bowness Hub.

Our New Home for Families Building

Trellis has been working for many years on a purpose-built facility that will provide affordable housing to serve families accessing services and supports from Trellis' Bowness Hub in Calgary, as well as those from other programs Trellis offers. Located in the heart of northwest Calgary, our new site is located at 6623 Bowness Road NW in a community that we have been working in since 1976. The site is well-situated; located in the heart of Bowness it is close to public transit (Calgary Transit Buses) and local amenities (Bowness Library, grocery stores, restaurants, and pharmacies). The site is also accessible and visible from two streets, giving it a unique presence in the community, and a great opportunity to improve street presence. We are looking forward to growing Trellis' housing supports for the community we serve. A home is the foundation that every family needs to succeed.

Our New Home for Families building will be accessible to the families Trellis supports, providing the opportunity for people of all ages, background, identities, orientations, and abilities to access affordable housing. Our new facility will allow us to:

- Meaningfully expand our housing programs by building and managing our own affordable family housing units that will be

tailored for newcomers, Indigenous families, and vulnerable children and youth. Trellis currently either owns or operates 14 buildings and houses up to 116 people.

- Provide new opportunities for family housing and contribute to alleviating Calgary's shortage of affordable housing for families in Calgary's northwest. We are **not** providing emergency or transitional housing on this site.



Figure 1 View as a pedestrian from Bowness Road NW

- Provide barrier-free units and an accessible facility to ensure that all residents can enjoy a safe, inclusive, and comfortable living environment.
- Expanding our affordable housing services near the Bowness Hub means we can create a seamless support network, ensuring

families have access to local essential resources and comprehensive support.

Owning our own affordable housing facility is the way for us to control and manage our operational costs and improve our organizational sustainability while significantly enhancing our services to the community and expanding community, expanding our reach and providing appropriate support to ensure families remain in their home.



Figure 2: View as a pedestrian from Bowwood Dr NW

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The goal of our engagement plan was to provide information and seek feedback from the broader community regarding our new

facility located on 6623 Bowness Rd NW. The following activities were undertaken:

- Trellis attended a regularly scheduled Planning & Development Committee meeting at the Bowness Community Association to discuss the affordable housing building and before plans were prepared to understand community concerns – June 5, 2024.
- Trellis launched a comprehensive website for information and feedback (via contact form) on August 21, 2024 - <https://www.trellishousingproject.ca>
- Door to Door visit to neighbours by Trellis + Larkspur staff 25 information cards to neighbouring residents near the property on August 21, 2024.
- Posted signs in the neighbourhood 4 weeks ahead of the open houses inviting neighbour to visit on the 15th and 16th of September.
- Delivered open house flyers to 178 homes + business in the surrounding blocks to proposed building location via 3rd Party – August 28, 2024.
- Requested the Bowness Community Association share a poster for the Trellis-hosted Open Houses on their website and community signage – August 28, 2024.

- Hosted In-Person Open Houses which consisted of 18 informational boards and a large project team to answer resident questions:
 - September 15 (2-5 pm)
 - September 16 (6-9 pm)

Trellis met with several stakeholders and community groups over a four-month period from June to September 2024 including our Councillor. In total, approximately 160 people participated in our meetings, phone calls, and open house sessions. Approximately, one hundred individuals participated in our open houses. The following summary represents comments provided to Trellis between June 5 and September 16, 2024.

High Level Summary of Comments Received

There were many positive comments from the broader community. Most concerns came from residents nearest to the site. Consistently concerns were regarding loss of greenspace, issues with parking, and worry that community character would be compromised.



Figure 4: Design concept aerial view from SE.

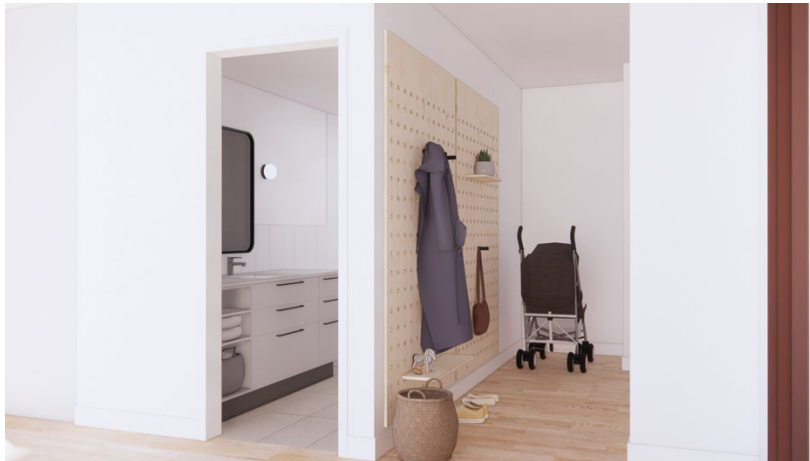


Figure 3: Preliminary Interior concept

One observation that came up consistently from many community members is the apparent need for affordable housing in Calgary. “Many residents of Bowness are a lot less fortunate and need help to avoid a future life of hardship and crime,” one resident noted. The urgency of this need is further underscored by another resident’s observation: “Calgary is in desperate need of affordable housing” and “we need more affordable housing.”

A feature that was warmly received was the commitment to accessibility, safety, and energy-efficiency. “It is such a huge need, and I love that these units will be accessible and energy efficient,” one participant remarked. A social worker in the area also stressed the importance of this building, saying, “Families deserve a safe home.” Many were pleased to see the number of 3-bedroom units and were supportive of the multigenerational concept with studio connections.

The design of the building was generally well received. Respondents thought that “the design looks great” and was “well-thought out.” Many remarked that “It looks like a place to call home” and “I like the warm and neutral palette.” Residents also highlighted their approval for having units of different sizes, notably the “3-bedroom units, which in my experience are very hard to find.” Even those who did not want us to move forward said “that if this is approved, we do like the building.”

Many respondents also thought that Trellis’ programs and services are much needed in the community and are glad to see the

organization continuing to provide services for the community. “Some of us do appreciate the work you are doing to bring more affordable housing to our City!” and are supportive “of Trellis and the good work it does”.

Greenspace and Playgrounds

The most commonly recurring concern was around the loss of greenspace and small playground at 6623 Bowness Road NW. Those neighbouring Residents of the property were mostly concerned about the loss of greenspace for children in the community. “Bowness values and cherishes greenspace” and “we are losing more and more green spaces to development”. A petition has been started by neighbouring residents who oppose to the loss of greenspace¹. There were a large number of Residents who were angry at the City for not keeping this site as a Park given the history. They argued that the City of Calgary had placed a playground on the site and even planted 18 trees three years ago so were at a loss as to why this was no longer considered a park.

¹ [Residents protest proposed development on Bowness green space | CTV News](#)

Those who support the building suggested that the site “it is walking distance to several services and greenspaces” and “the shift from an underutilized park space to this proposed development represents a meaningful improvement in land use.”

City Disposition of Land

Many Residents that attended were not aware of the Bowness ARP nor were they aware that this site was not identified as a Park in the ARP. They were angry at the City for taking away the Park. When asked if the land use was to proceed, many Residents indicated that the building was needed and was aesthetically pleasing, and the only concern was height.

Community Character

The second common concern was around the building fitting into the community character. The consensus is that “the rest of the neighbourhood is not higher than 3 stories” and the land use redesignation application for up to six stories “would significantly alter the neighborhood’s character and ambiance.” Residents who support the project feel “building taller residential next to the main commercial corridor makes sense” and the building “will provide much-needed affordable housing without compromising the community’s character or infrastructure.”

Parking

Many residents have pointed out that the area already suffers from congested street parking. One resident stated, “Parking is a real problem,” while another mentioned, that they felt the City of Calgary’s parking ratio of 0.85 parking spaces per 1 dwelling unit was insufficient, and that “a 1:1 parking ratio to ensure adequate parking availability for residents and surrounding neighbours.”

Crime and Security

Some residents felt that the families served by Trellis would bring more crime and drugs to the neighbourhood. They were concerned that these families along with affordable housing may lower property values. Many residents felt that their community had an over abundance of low-income housing, and that Trellis should move closer to the Superstore or the nearby Habitat for Humanity building (off 63 St NW). Some were adamant that the City did not have an affordable housing crisis blaming levels of government for bringing in too many immigrant families.

Privacy

There were privacy concerns for some residence of the neighbouring properties adjacent to the proposed building and a

few concerns over the potential for sun shadowing particularly during the summer months.

Long term Durability

There were a few concerns about the long-term durability of our new facility and whether the building would fall into disrepair as they felt so many other low-income housing projects do.

Aging Infrastructure

Residents expressed concerns about the cumulative impact of densification in the area on existing infrastructure. Residents feel "the insufficient 'infrastructure' in established neighbourhoods like Bowness to handle the growth" and are concerned about "how this building (and others) will impact it". Infrastructure here includes "Internet, water, schools, [and] parks".

Building Impact

Finally, some, particularly those living nearby felt that our new building would impede their personal enjoyment given that the site is small, and the building is perceived to be large. The change was seen to be overwhelming.

A detailed summary is provided in the matrix that follows where the issue is identified and described as we heard it. Within the matrix, we also provide a response as to how we dealt with the issue through design or, policy.

Our Response

Loss Greenspace and Playground

Though the site was never intended to be green space and is not allocated as such in the Land Use Bylaw or Bowness ARP, Trellis is working with the City of Calgary to develop a park and playground in close proximity to the current location. This park will be safe and accessible for all children and families. This is an exciting opportunity to create a play space that is barrier-free and inclusive. A portion of the proceeds of the property sales are to be re-invested into Park infrastructure in Bowness.

The City's is now exploring plans to improve nearby parks and greenspaces in the community. Two locations have been identified as potential sites for new amenities, dependant on the amount of final funding that will be confirmed in early 2025. One location is currently a vacant greenspace, the other has an existing older playground that can be improved and enhanced.

Once the funding for Park improvements has been confirmed over the coming months, Parks & Open Spaces will be working closely with the Bowness Community Association as well as the Ward 1 Office to collect feedback on preferred amenities and locations for improvements.



Figure 5: Trellis Site

The City of Calgary encourages residents to participate in ongoing public engagement on optimizing community play spaces in Bowness (<https://engage.calgary.ca/parkspaces>). This engagement will be extended for several months with the addition of these two new locations. This will give community members an opportunity to contribute their feedback on the types of amenities they would like to see in those greenspaces.

Community Character – height, density and aesthetic

Our building plan is guided by the Bowness Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP)².

Approved in 2019, the Bowness ARP was developed with Bowness residents' feedback. The Bowness ARP indicates that residential land use is a key strategy for the community. Namely that the majority of residential land use is placed in a conservation and infill policy to maintain Bowness' role of a low-density family-oriented community. Other lands, including the affordable housing property, were placed in a policy grouping to allow for low to medium density multi-dwellings.

This decision came from the Main Street engagement where the concept of "Bridge to Bridge" (Shouldice to 85 St bridges) was put forth by residents as a thoughtful way to sensitively increase density and provide more opportunity for a variety of housing forms along Bowness Road.

The Bowness ARP also confirms the City of Calgary's intention to dispose of City owned lands presently designated for residential use

² [Bowness Area Redevelopment Plan - 17P2019 \(mybowness.com\)](https://mybowness.com/Bowness-Area-Redevelopment-Plan-17P2019)

to be expediated for re-use to maximize housing choices in the community.

The Bowness Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) identifies the site as within the “Neighbourhood – Mid-Rise” district as defined in the Municipal Development Plan as up to six stories in height³. The Bowness ARP did not include the parcel in its current or future open space plans.



Figure 6: Municipal Development Plan definitions of Neighbourhood – Limited, - Low-Rise, and -Mid-Rise

The site for the proposed building is City of Calgary land with residential zoning (R-CG). Trellis is seeking a land use redesignation

³ [City of Calgary Developed Areas Guidebook – Municipal Development Plan](#)

to Mixed Use – General District (MU-1) with modifiers, specifically for height of 20.5 metres, maximum density of 50 units, and a floor area ratio⁴ of 3.0. The MU-1 is aligned with the property’s classification of Neighbourhood Mid-Rise in the Bowness ARP. The number of units will allow Trellis to ensure a sustainable building over time.

We choose this land use as we wanted the flexibility to address some of the issues raised by the community at our first engagement session. An MU-1 land use allows us the height we need to bring all the parking onsite without the expense of an underground parkade which would make our building not financially feasible. The additional 0.5M may also allow us to accommodate a rooftop amenity for residents – a private, welcoming space for families.

City of Calgary Disposition of the Land

The property was originally acquired by the City in 1973 for future Shaganappi Trail/Bow River overpass that never progressed. As part

⁴ Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a measure that compares the total floor area of a building to the size of the land it is built on, indicating how densely the land is being used

of *Home is Here*, The City of Calgary Housing Strategy 2024-2030⁵, Calgary is making City-owned parcels available for affordable housing. The property was offered at below market value as part of a Council-approved policy to release up to 10 parcels of developable land every two years to increase the capacity of non-profit affordable housing providers.

The property was determined to be surplus to municipal requirements and on October 14, 2022, Council approved a Method of Disposition (MOD) that included 6623 Bowness Rd NW as a Non-Market Land Sale #3 (NMLS#3) site. The property was marketed in March 2023 and Trellis Society was selected as the successful applicant for use for affordable housing⁶.

Parking

Trellis understands that parking is a real concern for the community in Bowness. Due to the high water table in the community, an underground parkade may not be feasible. Our current design allows parking to be at ground-level inside the building with access from Bowwood Dr NW.

⁵ [The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy](#)

MU-1 land use identifies 0.85 parking stall for each unit. Our preliminary parking design equates to 20 surface parking stalls, including 10 barrier free spaces. Reductions for access to bus hub and bike storage have been taken.



Figure 7: Preliminary ground floor schematic showing parking

Many of our clients may not have a vehicle particularly those on subsidies as a vehicle may reduce their eligibility for funding. The property is adjacent to major transit lines so residents may access

⁶ [Affordable housing providers in Calgary awarded three City-owned development sites](#)

Calgary Transit services. In addition, a portion of the ground level includes bike storage for building residents.

While Trellis will take all families in the new building, it will be aware of whether families have a vehicle or not when deciding who will be within the building.

Affordable Housing in Bowness

It is acknowledged that there are many affordable housing units within the Bowness community. Trellis will add only twenty-six (26) 3-bedroom units and twenty-four (24) 1-bedroom units for vulnerable families. Many of the studio units are collocated next to the three bedroom units with a common door to allow for intergenerational families. Twenty percent (20%) of the units will be barrier free.

According to the City of Calgary, at its most fundamental level, affordable housing is about people. Access to safe and stable housing helps create inclusive communities and adds to the overall health, prosperity and safety of our city.

People in affordable housing have greater chances to find and keep jobs, to learn and build skills, and be active participants in their communities. Affordable housing also helps boost the local economy by increasing the purchasing power of residents and by attracting employers with the promise of a stable workforce.

Keeping vulnerable residents off the streets also helps to reduce demand and pressure on emergency services, hospitals and correction facilities. Providing housing for one homeless person has been shown to save taxpayers \$34,000 annually⁷.

These families are looking for stable homes within their existing community; close to schools and amenities such as transit. Trellis is part of the solution for ensuring families can remain in their communities by offering supportive programs and services. Families will have access to support services from our Bowness Hub helping families build skills and resilience.

Privacy

We will provide a mix of units facing two street frontages, in addition to units facing east and west, ensuring active frontages

⁷ About Affordable Housing (calgary.ca)

along all building facades. Unit that have balconies facing shared property lines will have a minimum setback distance of 4.0m from the property line which provides an appropriate separation between neighbouring properties. Window design will be carefully considered to ensure a good level of privacy is provided to and from the building.

Crime in the Community

Many of the families we serve already live and work in Bowness. We therefore do not believe that these families will be a security concern or increasing crime in the neighbourhood. These families are looking for stable homes within their existing community and close to schools and amenities such as transit. Trellis will offer programs and services and will be a part of the solution.

We have designed family friendly and inclusive spaces. Families will have access to support services from our Bowness Hub helping families build skills and resilience. Families will also have safe access to outdoor amenities on the second and fifth floor. Housing will incorporate balconies to allow families with fresh access to fresh air within their living space, set at an offset to provide residents and neighbours privacy.

Long Term Maintenance of the Building

We have planned for very durable exterior cladding to maintain the visual aesthetic over time and to reduce maintenance costs for the organization. It should be noted that affordable housing must comply with the same building code requirements and design standards as market-rate housing, which includes fitting the character of the neighbourhood.

Trellis would also like to assure the community that as this will be a Trellis-operated facility we are committed to ensuring the building and landscaping is well-maintained to ensure it remains an example in the community, and a long-term sustainable asset for Trellis.

Property Values

The City's website reports that "More than 100 studies conducted in the US and Canada during the past 30 years show no evidence that property values are impacted by affordable housing

developments.”⁸ The City’s research also confirms that most often those accessing affordable housing already live in the neighbourhood or near the neighbourhoods. The City of Calgary does not consider the proximity of affordable housing in property tax assessments.⁹

The Bowness Site

Trellis looked at several different sites in the area, assessing their viability, before purchasing our current site from the City of Calgary in 2023. Available through Non-Market Land Sale in order to help non-profit housing providers to spend less capital fund on land acquisition and invest more in the development of housing for Calgarians. It was important that the building site be in a family-oriented neighbourhood and in close proximity to our existing Bowness Hub to ensure families had easy access to community supports. Especially as many of the families in need of affordable housing already live in Bowness.

The City has made affordable housing, particularly for families, a priority. There is a significant lack of affordable housing units within the City and though the City of Calgary is committed to and working

towards meeting the need, existing proposals still fall short. We believe that a range of housing provides a diversity that is good for the community and for everyone.



Figure 8: Preliminary Site Plan

Sun Shadows

There will be no sun shadowing for the adjacent properties to the SE during the summer months as per the current design. There will be some shadowing of the sun in the fall during the midday for the properties just southeast of the building. The shadow study of the existing parcel as a open space shows a sun shadow during winter throughout the day. The City of Calgary considers shadows from the

⁸ [About affordable housing \(calgary.ca\)](https://www.calgary.ca/about-affordable-housing)

⁹ [Affordable Housing Facts \(calgary.ca\)](https://www.calgary.ca/affordable-housing-facts)

Equinox in September at 2:00 pm for the shadow study outcomes for Land Use Redesignation and Development Permits.



Figure 9: Shadow study of proposed design throughout the year

The Building Impact

The site is indeed constrained by many factors. However, we pushed our building as far away from the existing development to the north and have been able to keep a 20-m buffer from the edge of the north property to our building edge. We intentionally

designed the building to be street responsive design with stepped massing with a more neighbourly feel on the Bowwood Dr side. Stepped back design has been used to prevent overlook into neighbouring properties, including for balconies. As well as to make the building feel less imposing at street level. To ensure the existing sidewalk buffer remains, a large setback is maintained from Bowness Rd (20 meters), and all faces of the building are treated as a ‘front face’- textured, articulated and more aesthetically pleasing.



Figure 8: Current conditions looking from Bowness Rd NW

Through our design, we believe that we have created a more urban streetscape – wider sidewalks, better pedestrian connection to the building. The residential units on our site are setback from Bowness Rd with their own private access points.

Eighteen trees were recently planted by the City of Calgary on the property. Efforts will be made to preserve as many trees as is reasonable. A plan is being put in place to potentially replant trees in nearby open spaces for the community. Our new building when the design is finished will be up to 20.5 metres (total 5 storeys).

430 unique visitors to the site, only 100 individuals attended the in-person open house and only 16 individuals provided comments to the website. A summary of the web statistics follows for the time between August 19 to September 17, 2024. The website is still open to receive comments.



Figure 9: Trellis is excited for the opportunity to expand our programming and provide homes for our families

Web Traffic

There was traffic on the web site at the beginning of the project, after Trellis team went door to door to residents on August 21, 2024. With spikes on September 5 and September 15, the first Trellis hosted Open House. It should be noted that out of the almost 15

Sessions over time

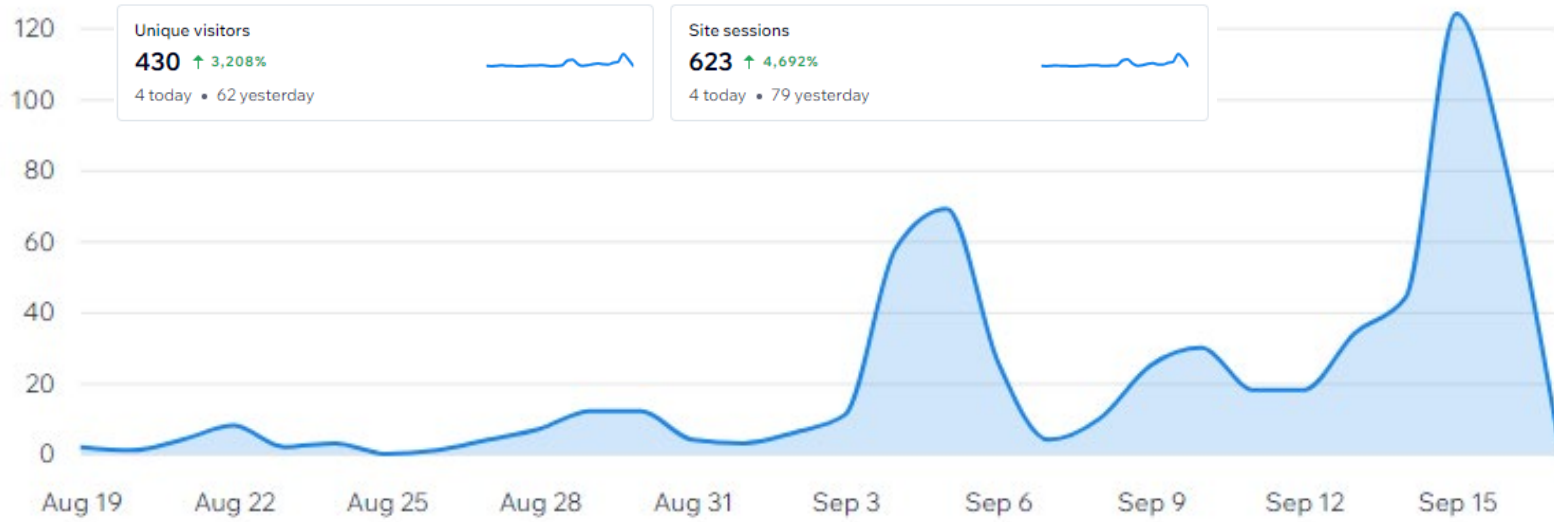


Figure 102: Trellis is excited for the opportunity to expand our programming and provide homes for our families

Next Steps

Trellis has heard the community. There is community support for the project, and we feel that our New Home for Families will create a positive impact in the community of Bowness. We acknowledge the concerns and issues many residents have raised and are committed to incorporating feedback where possible. And, we have been able to respond with our design. We feel that the engagement opportunities thus far have been successful in both receiving feedback from the community but also providing further information and clarification for community members.

Trellis will continue to provide opportunities for the community to engage with our process through our development website. At this point in time there will be no further Engagement Sessions.

We are also committed to continuing to work with stakeholders and Community Groups. We also hope to assist the City with plans for improvements to future play spaces and green spaces nearby to our site; we too hope that the families in our new building will be able to thoroughly enjoy this space.

There will be several more opportunities for the public to engage with the process through the City of Calgary Land Use Redesignation assessments and Development Permit application process. Trellis encourages community members to continue to provide their feedback during the process.

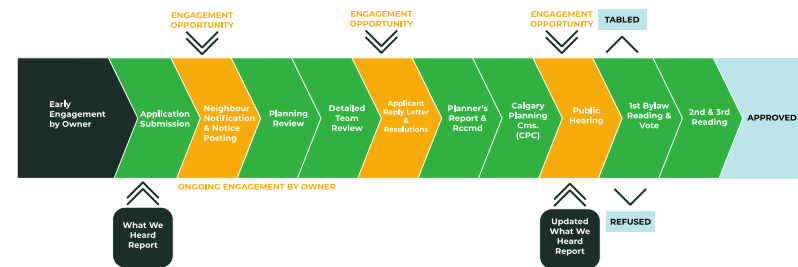


Figure 113: Opportunities for community input

This report will be updated as part of the Public Hearing stage of the City of Calgary process and be submitted to Council.