

# **A Catalyst for Growth:**

Transforming the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S 'RED Mile' Into A Complete Street

Red Mile Complete Street  
Advocacy Group  
November, 2017

## **17<sup>th</sup> Ave S RED Mile Complete Street Proposal – November 2017**

### **Executive Summary:**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District has become a place where Calgarians from all around the city shop and socialize. A three year reconstruction project of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave will deliver some positive gains to the corridor however once the project is complete the form and function of the avenue will remain similar to the way it was. An opportunity has been missed to make multi-modal improvements and reimagine how businesses along the entire corridor are accessed by Calgarians from the city's fastest growing regions meaning that businesses will have to suffer through construction pain with little gain.

Four key strategic goals are being proposed to improve access to businesses in the district:

- Recognize that patrons from Calgary's fast growing suburbs will most likely drive to the district and have an aversion to parallel parking. The proposed goal is to make it as easy as possible for someone driving to the district for the first time to navigate their way to an open parking spot.
  - ✓ Create a partnership between the Calgary Parking Authority (CPA), the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave BRZ organisation and the land-owners who control off-street parking around the district. The partnership would work to standardize parking rates along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S corridor.
  - ✓ Install 'number of available space' counters in off-street lots that participate in the partnership and link this information to improved wayfinding signage along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave to increase awareness and usage of off-street parking.
  - ✓ Have the CPA partner with developers to include an off-street public parking component as part of any new large-scale developments proposed for the district.
  
- Recognize that the 'heart' of the district currently sits around 8<sup>th</sup> St and 17<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and that the further distance to the east or west that businesses are located from this spot the less likely it is those businesses will receive visits by patrons drawn to the district. The proposed goal is that whether patrons drive, take transit or walk to any location in the district, they are encouraged to visit multiple businesses along the entire length of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor.
  - ✓ Begin a three year bike-share pilot program along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor with stations placed close to off-street parking lots and important transit stops. Ensure that the bikes are equipped with baskets to encourage people to shop as they explore the avenue.
  - ✓ Consider expanding a successful bike-share program throughout the rest of the centre city to draw more tourists, residents and downtown office workers into the district.
  
- Recognize that the inner city is one of Calgary's fastest growing areas and that these residents stand to be the most frequent patrons for businesses. The proposed goal is that cycling becomes a mode choice equal to driving or transit for these residents to access the district.
  - ✓ Install 1.45 metre wide cycle tracks on both the north and south sides of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave through the elimination of one lane of traffic.
  - ✓ Leverage the safety of the cycle tracks to encourage the use of the bike-share pilot program as well as to promote the use of pedi-cabs (bike taxis) along the corridor.

- Recognize that 17<sup>th</sup> Ave is an integral part of Calgary's road network and that on-street parking is important to area businesses. The proposed goal is to minimize the disruption the elimination of a lane to accommodate the installation of cycle tracks has to both commuters and businesses.
  - ✓ Create a lane reversal system for the three road lanes that would remain along the corridor to maintain two lanes of traffic flow in peak directions during rush hour periods. Install priority turn signals to minimize disruptions.
  - ✓ Maintain on-street parking along the south side of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave and look for ways, such as removing parking restriction in front of Western Canada High School outside of school pick-up and drop-off hours, to increase the number of available parking spaces.
  - ✓ Improve alley-ways to enhance delivery options to businesses and create designated delivery and taxi drop-off zones on side streets along the north side of the corridor to help compensate for the loss of on-street parking.

By adopting these four strategic goals and implementing them during the current road reconstruction project, 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue will be transformed into a true complete street. This will improve Calgarians' access to the entire retail and entertainment district and offer incentives for more people to visit area businesses regardless of their preferred mode of transportation. In doing so, it is hoped that this will launch 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue into its next phase of growth and create a vibrant corridor from end to end.

### **Introduction:**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District has become Calgary's go-to area to shop and socialize. As the population of Calgary continues to increase, the businesses calling the district home stand to see a further boost in patronage if a way can be found to improve access for people moving to the city's fastest growing areas. The fact that the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District spans a linear corridor of over 16 blocks increases the importance of adopting strategies that encourage simultaneous growth along the entire length corridor.

Investing in multi-modal transportation improvements using the City of Calgary's 'complete street' principles will encourage a greater number of Calgarians to feel comfortable visiting the district regardless of how they travel there and will encourage more frequent trips by residents of neighbouring communities. Adopting an improvement strategy that recognizes that there's a finite amount of both on and off street parking that can be provided along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S is key. It is therefore ideal to create parking strategies that target the Calgarians who are required to drive due to the distance they must travel.

With a parking strategy in place for drivers, enhancing alternative transportation modes offers the best opportunity to further boost the number of visitors. Unfortunately LRT access to the district is limited to the eastern end and while improvements are being made to the sidewalks along the corridor, high traffic volumes and the presence of parked cars makes cycling along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S a non-starter for recreational cyclists. Creating safe cycling infrastructure will boost the number of people cycling to the district and introduces the possibility of creating Calgary's first bike share program. It's time for 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S to evolve into Calgary's premier complete street.

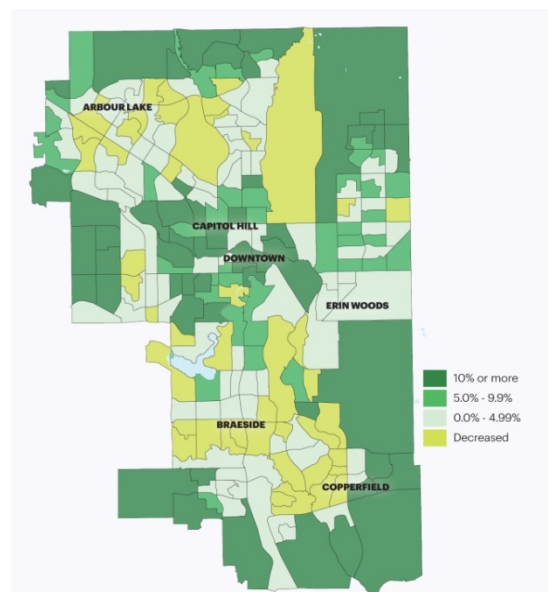
### A Perfectly Timed Opportunity:

From 2017 through to 2019 the City of Calgary will be reconstructing 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S. The final design proposal includes standardizing lane-widths at 3.3 m and widening sidewalks on both sides of the avenue by 0.2 m. The scheduled construction work introduces a window of opportunity where the project scope can be expanded to include a greater number of complete street principles while minimizing the impact on adjacent merchants and residents.

In addition to the reconstruction of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S, the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) has recently entered into a partnership with the Calgary Stampede to assist in increasing the year-round vibrancy of Stampede Park. How 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S can serve as a gateway to the park will be an important element of that discussion. The opportunity to introduce an at-grade pedestrian and cyclist crossing of the LRT tracks at Victoria Park Station combined with the fact that the City of Calgary is currently undertaking measures to update the Calgary Bikeway Plan means the opportunity to explore a new vision for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S corridor that incorporates cycling has also never been better.

### A New Approach to the Red Mile:

The population of Calgary is continuing to increase and a winning strategy for businesses in the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave Retail & Entertainment District will be finding ways to target patrons from areas of the city that are seeing the greatest amount of that growth. A look at the Calgary 2016 Census Urban Growth Map shows that the areas best targeted are Calgary's fast growing green-field suburbs as well as the inner city. It is important to note that while Calgarians in both of these growth regions may view 17<sup>th</sup> Ave as a premier destination to visit, competition for both their time and money will increase as the city's other destination neighbourhoods continue to evolve. Increasing the ease of accessing 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S will help keep it on top. It will require different strategies to attract more people from different regions of the city. The best outcome will be achieved by enacting several strategies that complement each other.



*\*Calgary 2016 Census Urban Growth Map*

The first proposed strategy to be examined is how to increase the likelihood that someone will visit the district from their suburban home. Based on Calgarians' commuting habits, the assumption should be made that this group of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave patrons will be visiting using a vehicle as their transportation method of choice. Unfortunately the current 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S reconstruction project does little to dramatically alter the parking situation along the corridor. Given this reality, in order to encourage more suburban residents to visit businesses along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S any improvement strategy must recognize that there is no cohesive plan for off-street parking along the corridor and that the on-street parking that is offered may limit the number of people willing to drive to the district while also having negative impacts on area residents.

A 2016 online poll of 2,000 adults in the UK who drive conducted by One Poll on behalf of Confused.com revealed some telling behaviours when it comes to how drivers approach parallel parking. **More than half of drivers (53%) have gone past an empty space because it would require them to parallel park, three in ten (30%) admit to parking more than one mile from their destination rather than attempt to parallel park and one in five (22%) said they would rather continue to circle around a street until an easier space becomes available.** Based on the poll results, an inference can be made that area businesses are losing out as prospective patrons try their best to avoid the on-street parking offered along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave. Time that could be spent visiting a business is instead spent seeking out better parking.

Looking at the combined survey results, it's also easy to see how the reliance on parallel parking and the lack of an off-street parking strategy for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor has a knock-on effect for residents in adjacent areas. As drivers avoid the parallel parking spaces available along the avenue, they spill out onto adjacent side-streets in the hopes that the quality of parking spaces will improve. As people park on the side-streets, they begin to take up the limited spaces that are available for visitors to area residents and start to negatively impact the vitality of the neighbourhood as a whole. Recognizing that one in three people may park up to one mile away from their destination to avoid parallel parking shows what a critical role an off-street parking strategy can play in encouraging drivers to visit the area.

A strategy that acknowledges the shortcomings 17<sup>th</sup> Ave has for drivers is a good first step however a complementary strategy that accounts for the shortcomings of alternative transportation modes is also needed. The fact that due to their proximity to 17<sup>th</sup> Ave, residents of Calgary's rapidly growing inner city are more likely to use these alternative modes should not be lost. Unfortunately the current 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S reconstruction plan ignores one key area of concern identified by Calgarians during the City of Calgary's main-street engagement sessions. This area of concern was captured as *"Unattractive, not pedestrian friendly, not cyclist friendly"* by the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave reconstruction information display boards shown to the public in the spring of 2016.

Although important steps are currently being taken to address the attractiveness and pedestrian friendliness of the district, a way to address the public's concern about cycling is still missing from the reconstruction project. This means the improvements to 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S ignore one of the main guiding principles of the Complete Streets Policy and Guide that was unanimously approved by City Council on Nov 3, 2014. The guide states:

*“Complete Streets aim to increase the attractiveness, convenience and safety of all modes of transportation by creating a new selection of multi-modal streets that emphasize walking, cycling and transit, incorporate elements of green infrastructure and function in the context of surrounding land uses.”*

The 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District is made up primarily of restaurants, shops, mixed-use residential and mixed-use office buildings. All of these land uses orient themselves to pedestrians and cyclists. The introduction of dedicated cycling infrastructure would be in keeping with the goal of the City’s Complete Streets Policy and Guide while complementing the existing land uses.

While the available right-of-way of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S means that the introduction of a cycle track will have an impact on other modes of transportation, the Complete Streets Policy and Guide takes this into account:

*“A Complete Street is a street for which the needs of all users (all ages, income levels, and levels of physical ability) have been considered in its planning and design (or redesign). **All users are not necessarily accommodated to the highest standards possible, particularly when right-of-way is limited. There is often the need for trade-offs between the users sharing the space in order to achieve the end design.**”*

By re-imagining the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor through embracing complete street principles and taking a fresh approach to parking it is felt that the City of Calgary can substantially increase the district’s accessibility and appeal for both suburban and urban Calgarians.

### **Project Vision:**

The proposed Red Mile Complete Street enhancements would run along the portion of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S between 15 St SW and Macleod Trail SE. Eventually they would also include a level crossing of the LRT tracks and expand east, through the Stampede Grounds, offering pedestrian and cycling links to the new Enmax Park and Elbow River Pathway.



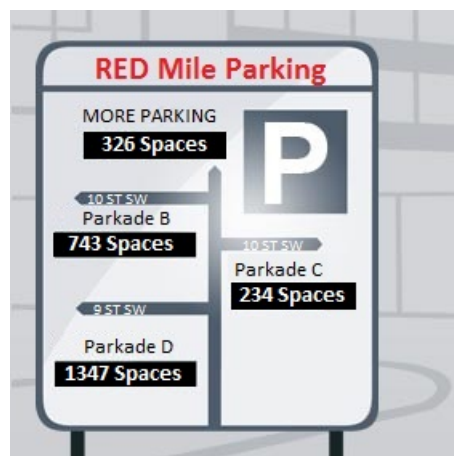
The Red Mile Complete Street enhancements would work towards making 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S a street that better serves all Calgarians along this corridor, regardless of their mobility mode of choice, and are broken down into **four strategic goals**:

## 1. Improve access for suburban Calgarians by creating a corridor parking strategy:

In order to recognize the importance of the corridor, a shift in thinking needs to be made in terms of parking strategy. While the City of Calgary through the Calgary Parking Authority (CPA) currently manages on-street parking as well as some off-street parking, the majority of off-street parking lots along the corridor have been created to serve the developments that they are a part of. A need exists to unify the currently segregated parking worlds to ensure that investment is made in both types of parking so that they complement each other and deliver a much greater benefit to the businesses along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor.

To satisfy the need for a more holistic approach to parking, it is recommended that the Red Mile Parking Partnership be established between the CPA, the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S BRZ and land owners who have either built or are planning to build developments that include a large public parking component. The primary aim of the partnership would be to remove a perceived barrier to Calgarians using off-street parking facilities by standardizing parking rates along the corridor. This would eliminate the need for people to shop around for a parking space and allow them to make use of the first conveniently located on or off-street parking space that they come across.

In terms of off-street parking, recently built as well as proposed developments will increase the available supply along, or in close proximity to, 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S. The key challenge will be to increase public awareness of the availability of off-street parking along the corridor. As such, it is recommended that the City of Calgary work with private developers to introduce parking capacity display technology to both existing and new parkades and then link the information to electronic wayfinding signage that would be displayed at key points along the corridor. This signage would have branding unique to the corridor and would be modeled after concepts used widely in European centres and can be seen locally in the town of Banff as well as at shopping malls such as Chinook Centre. Lighting and signage upgrades to parking entranceways and alley access points will also help improve the user experience.



*\*Example of Proposed Parking Signage*

To further bolster the use of off-street parking facilities, mitigate concerns over the reduction of on-street parking due to other elements of the Red Mile Complete Street vision and help add to the vitality of businesses that are located along both the eastern and western ends of the corridor, it is also recommended that the Calgary Parking Authority identify areas along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor where parking coverage gaps exist and work with private developers to pursue collaborative opportunities to include public parking facilities in new developments. This would build on recent success seen in areas of the city such as Kensington where the Calgary Parking Authority collaborated with Battistella Developments to incorporate public parking in the Lido development.

In terms of on-street parking, it is important to note that it too plays an important role in the creation of a complete street. Currently, on-street parking is allowed in both the westbound and eastbound curb lanes during off-peak hours. Part of the Red Mile Complete Street vision includes the introduction of cycle tracks along both the westbound and eastbound curb lanes by eliminating a lane of traffic and shifting the three remaining traffic lanes towards the centre of the street. In choosing which lane of traffic to eliminate, it is important to focus on a recommendation that mitigates the impact to on-street parking.

A cursory review of the existing parking policy along the avenue reveals certain opportunities to add parking along the south side of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S. As an example, parking restrictions currently in place that prevent parking along the south side of the avenue between 7 St SW and 4th S SW could be reduced to create an opportunity for more on-street parking during off peak hours. This combined with the fact that a bus loading zone is required in front of Western Canada High School is the reason for the recommendation to keep on-street parking along the south side.

As part of the recommended road configuration, parking restrictions during the afternoon rush hour would be delayed until 4pm to accommodate the need for bus loading in front of Western Canada High School. To mitigate the loss of on-street parking along the north side it is recommended that the City of Calgary conduct a parking review along the corridor to examine further opportunities to add on-street parking along corridor.

## **2. Improve accessibility along the Red Mile corridor once people are there:**

Unlike other neighbourhood districts such as Kensington or Marda Loop that have a compact urban footprint, the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District faces a unique challenge as it is spread out linearly over 16 city blocks and is a busy road during peak hours. To walk the corridor from one end to the other takes approximately 35 minutes meaning someone who parks at the west end of the corridor or takes the train to the east end must commit to 1 hour and 10 minutes of walking to simply explore all the shops and services the district has to offer. Therefore any improvements to how people access the district itself must also be accompanied by a ways to improve the speed at which they can explore the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor, maximizing the number of business visited and encouraging growth on the peripheries of the district.



Currently, the heaviest concentration of development in the district sits around the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> St and 17<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, helping to form the 'heart' of the Red Mile. It also happens to be the area that currently enjoys the greatest amount of off-street parking. To address this issue and improve movement along the corridor, a three year bike-share pilot program focussed on 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S is being proposed. The City of Calgary can examine various ways to deliver the pilot program but one key thing should be that bikes are equipped with baskets to encourage people to shop as they explore the avenue. If successful, the bike-share program can be expanded throughout the city centre which would further increase the number of visitors to the district.

The Victoria Park LRT Station and the various off-street parking lots create hubs for people arriving to the district. It is recommended that bike-share stations be set up in close proximity to these locations to allow people to easily transition from car or transit to bicycle. It's recommended the bike share pilot program be run from April 1 until October 31<sup>st</sup> as, according to weatherspark.com, both dates enjoy average daily high temperatures around +6° C. Using set dates helps create clear timelines for Calgarians as to when the pilot project is available to them and the selection of these specific dates based on their average daily high temperature is supported in part by data collected along the City of Calgary's cycle track network that showed on March 1, 2016, a day that was partly sunny and had a high of +5° C, there were 736 cyclists counted by the 5<sup>th</sup> St and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave counter.

By introducing a bike-share pilot project to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District, a person who wishes to travel the corridor from one end to the other can do so in approximately 10 minutes by making use of the pilot project. As a round trip would take 20 minutes by bike as opposed to 1 hour and 10 minutes by walking, a person would have 50 additional minutes to spend in restaurants and shops. In recognition of how long it takes to travel the corridor by bike and to encourage availability of bikes, it's recommended pricing be structured to encourage frequent usage and high turn-over of bikes. This would be accomplished by pricing the first 20 minutes of rental quite cheap but becoming dramatically more expensive for longer rentals. It is also recommend that the bike-share pilot program have few barriers to entry (such as a membership fee) to encourage first time users.

In recognition of the fact that not every Calgarian may feel comfortable using a bike-share program, an opportunity also exists to boost the number of pedi-cabs (bicycle taxis) along the avenue. During the three year bike-share pilot program, it is recommended that the City of Calgary work with existing pedi-cab operators to create special promotional rates specific to journeys along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave corridor. These special rates could possibly be continued beyond the pilot program time frame through special sponsorship agreements by businesses in the district of by the BRZ itself.

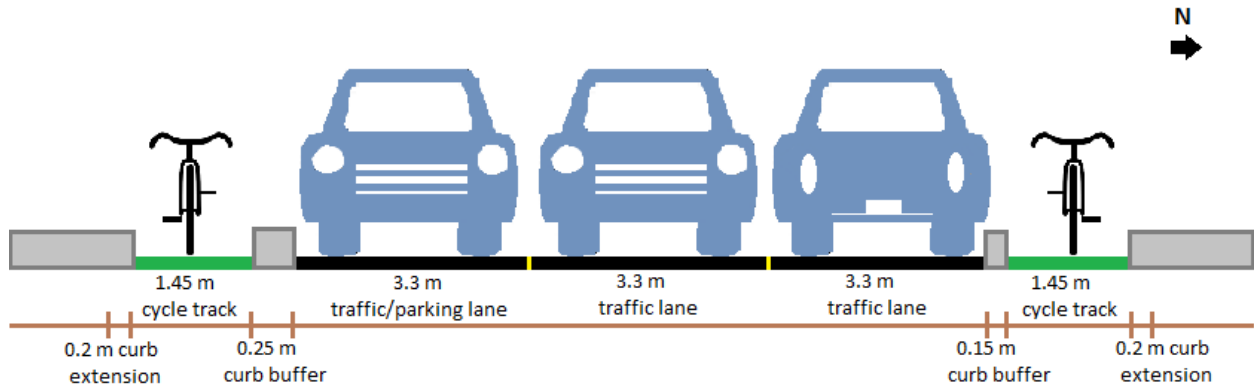
### 3. Improve access for urban Calgarians by installing cycle tracks:

With the recommended parking strategy targeting visitors to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District from Calgary's growing suburbs, it's important to also focus on recent census data that shows the inner city as a key growth area. Given 17<sup>th</sup> Ave's location, it is this group of people that stands to become the most frequent and loyal customers to area businesses. To help target this group of Calgarians as well as to encourage the use of the proposed bike-share pilot program it is recommended that cycle tracks be introduced as part of the Red Mile Complete Street vision to create a safer cycling environment.

In their 2016 report entitled 'Active Transportation and Real Estate – the next frontier', the Urban Land Institute discusses a street upgrade to Broadway Avenue in Salt Lake City that involved adding protected bike lanes. In the first six months of the following year, retail sales were up 8.8 percent over the first six months of the previous year, compared with a citywide increase of only 7 percent. The same report revealed that, **on average, people who arrive to a business on a bike spend less per visit than people who arrive by car (\$10.66 by bike vs \$13.70 by car) but visit more often, spending more money per month (\$75.66 by bike vs \$61.02 by car)**. It is targeting these kinds of metrics what will help boost businesses along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S.

As part of the current 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S reconstruction project, lanes of traffic will be standardized at 3.30 metres wide. This would allow for the introduction of cycle tracks through the removal of one lane of traffic. Cycle tracks would run on both the north and south sides of 17th Ave with a width of 1.45 metres. On the north side a 0.15 metre barrier would be created between traffic and the cycle track and on the south side a 0.25 metre buffer would be created to accommodate the fact that cars will be parked on the south side of the street as part of this proposal. At 1.45 metres wide, the cycle track would be able to accommodate most pedi-cabs as they tend to average between 1.01 metres (40 inches) and 1.27 metres (50 inches) wide, allowing them to operate along the corridor without interfering with traffic.

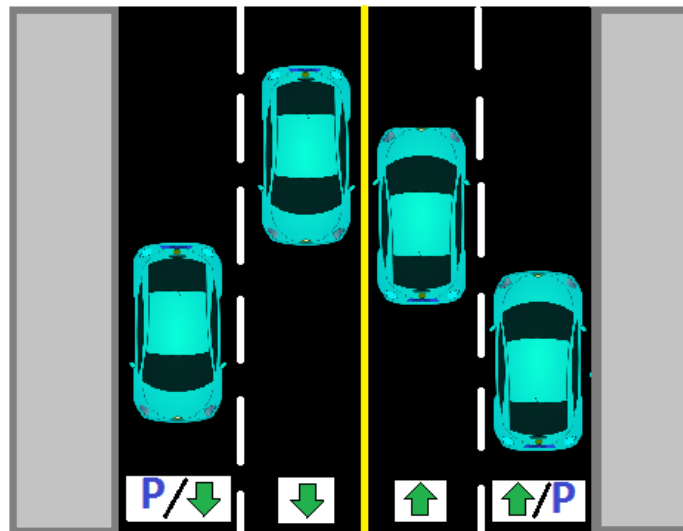
The proposed Red Mile cycle tracks will only be useful if they are accessible to cyclists. Beginning the cycle tracks at 15<sup>th</sup> Street west allows them to tie in to roads in the communities of Bankview and Sunalta that are not heavily used by traffic. The risk created by cyclists exiting Sunalta on the north side of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave and entering the cycle track on the south side of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave can be mitigated by the introduction of a new set of traffic lights at 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S and 15<sup>th</sup> St SW that are only activated by either cyclists or pedestrians. The cycle tracks will also connect with the existing 5<sup>th</sup> Street cycle track and through it the Bow River pathway, increasing the likelihood a greater portion of the cycle track network will be used for recreational purposes. Ending the proposed 17<sup>th</sup> Ave cycle tracks at the Enmax Park on the Stampede Grounds will connect them directly to the Elbow River pathway.



*\*Proposed Red Mile Complete Street Cross Section*

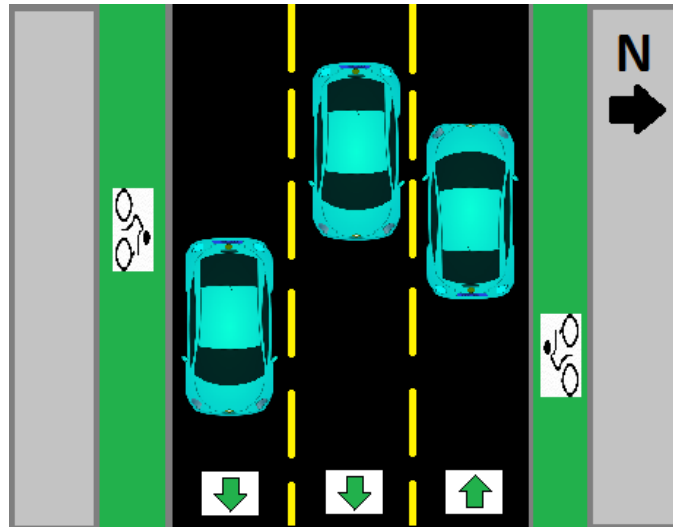
**4. Mitigate Impact on existing users:**

Although the Red Mile Complete Street vision tries to reimagine what is possible for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S corridor, it is important to recognize that what currently exists helped create the vibrancy the area currently enjoys. It is also important to recognize the important role 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S plays in Calgary’s transportation network. Steps must be taken to mitigate the impact the various recommendations have on existing users. To minimize the impact from the installation of the cycle tracks, lane reversal and priority turn signals would be introduced along the avenue. This allows for on-street parking to be kept on the south side of the avenue and would preserve the two lanes of travel in peak directions during rush hour. Delivery areas and drop off zones for taxis would be created along side streets on the north side of the avenue to compensate for the loss of on-street parking

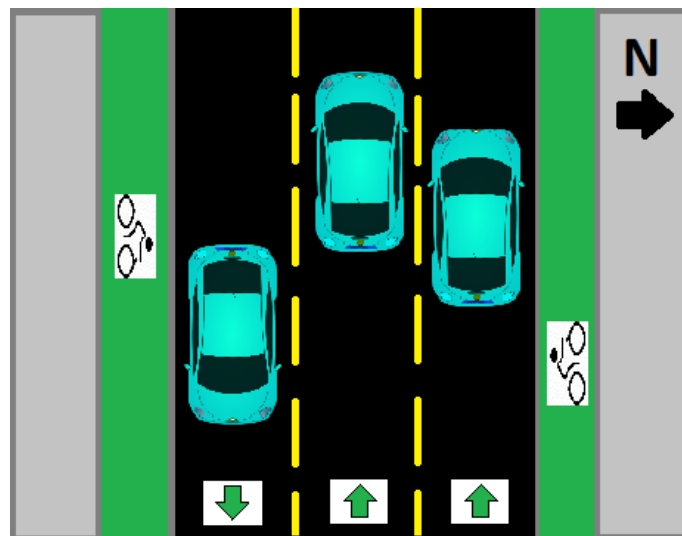


*\*17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Cross Section with Red Mile Cycle Track (After Completion of 2017-19 Roadworks)*

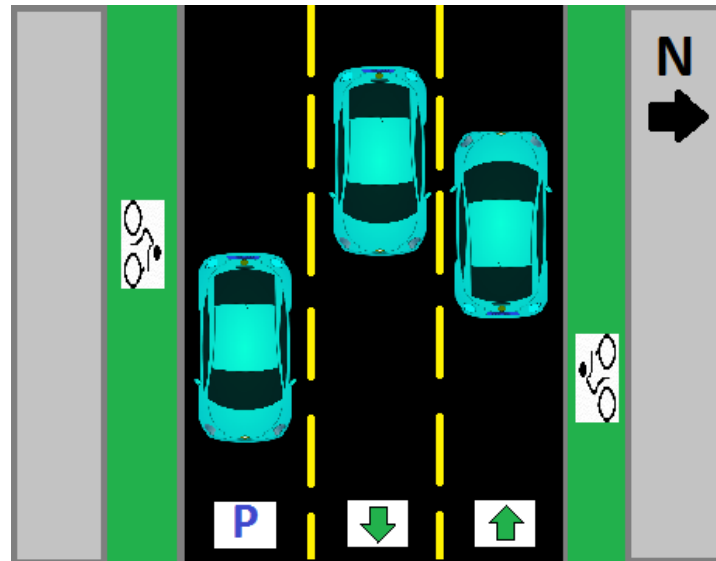
The cycle track project would maintain the sidewalk widths proposed for 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S as part of the current reconstruction project. Traffic would be impacted by the removal of the northernmost travel lane, reducing the total vehicle travel lanes along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S to three lanes. In recognition of the fact that 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S serves as a key artery for vehicle commuters during peak travel periods as well as accommodates on-street parking during off-peak travel periods, lane reversal principles would be utilized to introduce the concept of the “swing lane” along the avenue. This “swing lane” would serve to minimize the loss of a vehicle travel lane as much as possible by alternating roles depending on the time of day.



*\*Proposed 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Cross Section with Red Mile Cycle Tracks (AM Peak Travel Period)*



*\*Proposed 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Cross Section with Red Mile Cycle Tracks (PM Peak Travel Period)*



***\*Proposed 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Cross Section with Red Mile Cycle Tracks (Off-Peak Travel Periods)***

The introduction of lane reversal technology and the concept of a swing lane will be key in mitigating the impact the cycle tracks may have on rush hour traffic along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S. Lane reversal technology will be used to allow for two travel lanes to remain in use during times of peak traffic flow. In the AM period this would ensure two eastbound lanes of travel and in the PM period this would ensure two westbound lanes of travel. The current peak period parking restrictions along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S would remain to permit the third lane to accommodate opposite direction traffic. Further mitigation can be accomplished through the installation of right and left turn priority signalling at key intersections. It should also be noted that once 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S is extended into the Stampede grounds lane reversal may prove valuable for improving access to and from the Stampede grounds for drivers who use the MacLeod Trail couplet before or after large events.

Recognition must also be given to the fact that 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S is an important transit corridor and that the introduction of cycle tracks would impact multiple bus stops. Passengers boarding or exiting buses would have to do so by passing through the cycle tracks. This creates a risk of pedestrian/cyclist collisions. To mitigate this risk it is proposed that the sidewalk be extended into the cycle track at all bus stops. This would maintain transit user's current curb-side access to low floor transit buses. A ramp would bring cyclists in the cycle track up onto the expanded sidewalk and serve as a speed bump to help slow cycling speeds in the conflict zone. The expanded sidewalk would be painted green and white to denote a cyclist/pedestrian conflict zone and signs would be installed instructing cycle track users to yield to pedestrians boarding/exiting transit buses. The experience gained by the introduction of cycling along Stephen Avenue demonstrates that cycling/pedestrian conflicts can be minimized when heightened awareness measures are taken.



*\*Examples of signage and sidewalk extension, ramps and markings in bus zones*

The 17<sup>th</sup> Ave Retail & Entertainment District is one of the busiest pedestrian corridors in the City of Calgary. The installation of the cycle tracks would preserve the widening of sidewalks along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave that is currently underway while providing additional benefits to the pedestrian realm. Offering casual cyclists an alternative to riding on the sidewalk will reduce the chance of pedestrian/cyclist conflicts and maximize the use of sidewalk space for pedestrians. The installation of the cycle tracks would also create a further buffer between the sidewalks along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S and traffic. This will help increase the walkability of the area, encourage people to make use of the new street furniture that is being installed as part of the reconstruction project and help create a better atmosphere for the businesses with patio spaces along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S.

### **A Catalyst for Encouraging the Urban Explorer – Cycle Tracks & Bike-Share:**

The recent discussions surrounding the Green Line LRT have revealed a desire by both the City of Calgary and Calgarians to create communities where people go to instead of drive through. The 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District has long been a place where Calgarians from all over drive to however the role it plays as part of the road network means alternative modes of transportation have been sacrificed to preserve Calgarians' abilities to drive through the corridor, bypassing businesses in the area.

Calgary's existing centre city cycle track network can play a key role in encouraging cycling as an alternative way of accessing the Red Mile. One of the network's project goals is increasing cycling use by women, children and seniors. Providing retail and entertainment destinations along the cycle track network beyond the downtown commercial core will go a long ways to meeting this goal as cycling in the centre city evolves beyond a way for people to commute to work and instead encourages people of all demographics to use their bicycles to explore Calgary's urban communities.

To get a better idea of who might turn to cycling and become an urban explorer we can turn to a public telephone survey conducted by the City of Calgary to inform its 2011 cycling strategy. In the survey Calgarians identified recreation as the most common purpose for cycling trips. It goes on to conclude that *"these recreational cyclists may be more receptive to other types of cycling, especially local trips to the neighbourhood store or to visit a friend"*. The introduction of cycle tracks to make 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S a complete street would expand the centre city cycle track network beyond its primary role of assisting people in their commutes to work by introducing multiple destinations for local trips as well as recreational cycling in the city centre.

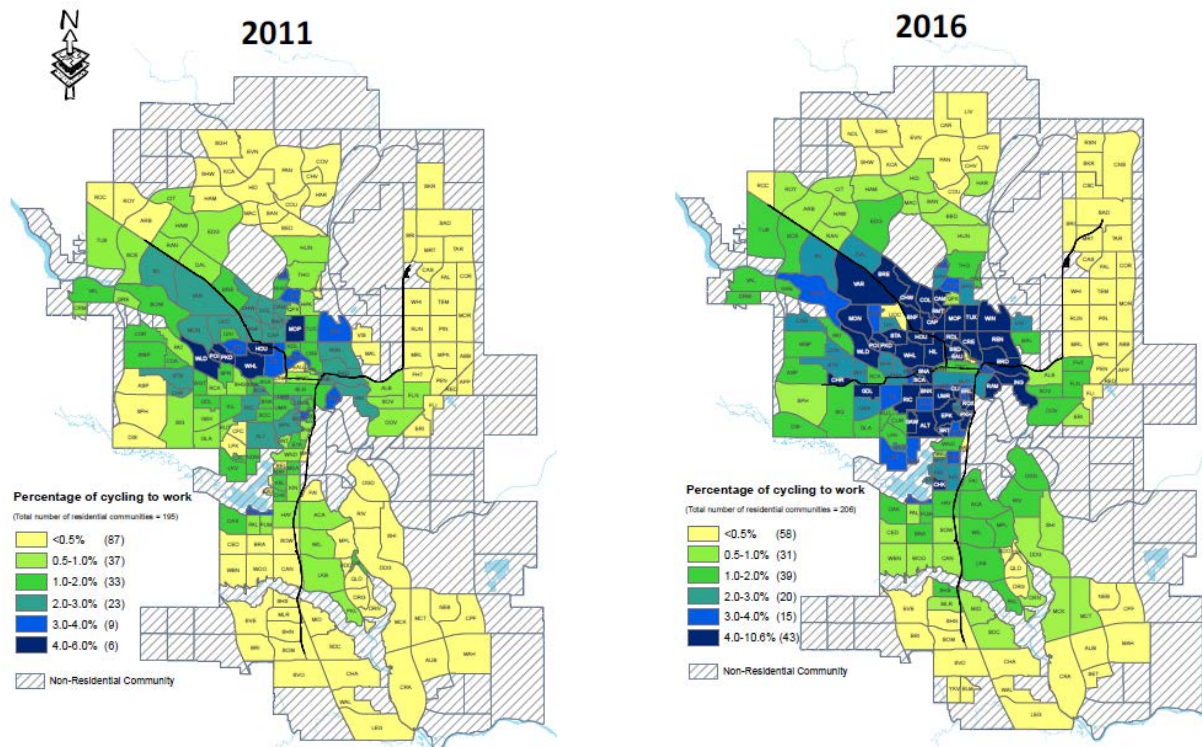
There is further evidence that the introduction of cycle tracks on 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S might help expand the appeal of the existing cycle track network beyond the traditional user group. In addition to recreation being identified as the most common purpose for cycling trips it is important to note that the 2011 cycling strategy also revealed that 51% of Calgarians identified as “Interested Cyclists”. As per the report, “Interested Cyclists” do not typically identify as a cyclist, are not comfortable sharing the road with motor vehicles without a visible bike facility but are interested in cycling if the route is on a bike facility. Essentially although 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S represents a key destination for people to travel to, 51% of Calgarians would not consider using cycling as a mode of transportation to visit it due to the constraints of the existing road configuration.

Introducing both cycle tracks and a bike-share pilot program along the corridor to cater to the urban explorer will also go a long way to increase off-peak cycle track use as well as meeting some of the City of Calgary’s mobility goals as summarized in the 2011 cycling strategy, namely:

- ✓ imagineCalgary: Principle #10 – provide transportation services in a safe, effective, affordable and efficient manner that ensures reasonable accessibility to all areas of the city for all citizens.
- ✓ Direction from MDP: Direction #5 – increase mobility choices.
- ✓ Direction from MDP: Direction #7: create complete streets.
- ✓ CTP Transportation Goals: Goal #4: Enable public transit, walking and cycling as the preferred mobility choices for more people.

While the communities in close proximity to the centre city are the primary target for users, recent data on commuting patterns reveal that the potential catchment area extends to a wide range of Calgary neighbourhoods. In 2011 there were just six communities where at least four percent of respondents reported commuting by bike. In 2016 that had risen to forty three communities. As can be seen in the latest census information, these communities also happen to be some of the fastest growing in the city.

Those Calgarians who identify as “interested cyclists” in this ring of forty-three communities are the target users for the cycle tracks and stand to be the most frequent customers to business along the corridor. Providing safe cycling infrastructure and combining it with a bike-share pilot program that could expand beyond 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S to the downtown core dramatically increases the likelihood that the tens of thousands of Calgarians who work downtown would consider visiting the businesses in the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S Retail & Entertainment District.



***\*Graphics taken from the City of Calgary Mode Split to Work – Bicycle infographic***

In addition to appealing to residents of inner city communities, the introduction of safe cycling infrastructure combined with off-street parking improvements may go a long way to increasing the appeal of the network to those living in Calgary's far flung suburbs. It is not unheard of to see people packing their bicycles in their cars and driving into the centre city to bike along the river pathways. It is a hope of the complete street vision that Calgarians will take advantage of the proposed off-street parking improvements along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S and consider doing much the same thing along the corridor to the benefit of area businesses. Even for those Calgarians without bicycles the availability of the bike-share program should encourage them to explore the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S corridor in a similar fashion.

The existing centre city cycle track network is also easily accessible via Calgary's CTrain network with stations available along the Blue/Red Line at 6<sup>th</sup> St SW and 4<sup>th</sup> St SW and will eventually offer access to Calgarians living along the proposed Green Line via a station along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S. By introducing the cycle tracks along 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S as a way to easily access the district's popular shops, restaurants and services the motivation for Calgarians to make use of the CTrain network to access the cycle tracks during off peak times such as evenings, weekends and holidays also increases and provides an alternative mode of transportation for those living in Calgary's suburbs who would typically need to drive down to the area. The availability of a bike-share program and placement of a bike-share station at Victoria Park CTrain Station should also help increase the odds people take transit to the corridor and help free up more parking along the avenue.



One other important category of the urban explorer also needs to be addressed and that is the tourists. According to Tourism Calgary's 2016 annual report, 7,242,637 people had visited Calgary during the previous year and 2,936,867 hotel rooms were sold to support them. The current design of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S means that access to the area businesses is targeted towards tourists who have access to cars and are comfortable with on-street parallel or those who enjoy walking longer distances from the hotels located in the city's core. It unfortunately means that the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave Retail & Entertainment District is, and will continue to be, missing out on drawing a large percentage of the many tourists who spend time in the centre city.

The proposed parking strategy for the district will hopefully help attract more of the tourists who do have access to a car. As some hotels have started providing guests with bicycles to help them explore, the introduction of cycle tracks along the 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S corridor will encourage them to visit as well. Finally the introduction of a bike-share pilot program will help tourists who do venture down to the district to explore the entire length of the corridor and the novelty of the bike-share program may help to draw in tourists by itself. In all cases, the businesses along the corridor win by capturing a greater percentage of the very valuable tourist dollars which in a 2014 market research study Tourism Calgary placed at \$1.58 billion in annual spending.

### **In Conclusion:**

Taking a 'complete street' approach to 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S will improve access to the area for the hundreds of thousands of Calgarians that live in the rapidly growing communities that surround downtown Calgary as well as those in the suburbs. Regardless of what modes of transportation people choose, increasing access to the businesses that line the street for all modes is a major benefit of this proposal and will hopefully have a transformative effect on the corridor. Although the ideal complete street can't be constructed in the existing 17<sup>th</sup> Ave right-of-way this proposal still meets the guidelines of the City of Calgary's Complete Streets Guide.

With the review of the City of Calgary's bikeway plan moving forward, pending improvements to Stampede Park and the refurbishment of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S, the timing has never been better to re-imagine the way we look at 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S and make the appropriate investments needed to transform it into one of the continent's great streets. The current 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S reconstruction process requires area business to survive three years of construction and leaves Calgarians with the same street that existed before. With proper risk mitigation, the vision put forward in this document can turn Calgary's most important retail and entertainment corridor into Calgary's best complete street. The drawbacks are minimal but the possibilities are endless.