



BUSINESS MATTERS

A VISION FOR A THRIVING, INCLUSIVE AND AMBITIOUS CALGARY

Calgary Chamber 2025 Municipal Election Platform



Fall 2025



Business matters — to a prosperous Calgary, and to the vibrancy, liveability and strength of our communities.

Over the past four years, Calgary businesses have navigated constant change, navigating a global pandemic, shifting domestic priorities, geopolitical uncertainty, volatile commodity prices, supply chain disruptions and most recently, trade conflicts with our largest trading partner.

Despite this persistent uncertainty, Calgary’s business community continues to thrive. Our city continues to grow at a pace that outperforms the rest of the country, while steadily diversifying and futureproofing our economy. Calgary’s economic diversification is well underway; we’re leveraging our entrepreneurial mindset, starting up businesses in new sectors, attracting record amounts of venture capital, and becoming a magnet for talent choosing to make Calgary home.

Businesses – across sectors and sizes – are selecting Calgary as a place to grow and scale because we have several key advantages: a young and highly educated workforce, a mature ecosystem of supports for startups – including a robust angel investor and family office network – logistics connections with nearby rail, air and highways, and a strong economy underpinned by natural resources and innovation. These unique advantages are leveraged by an unwavering entrepreneurial spirit that drives our city.

Challenges & opportunities

Calgary has been growing at an explosive pace. Between 2020 to 2024 we welcomed nearly 220,000 new residents to our city. From 2023 to 2024 alone, Calgary’s population grew by nearly 100,000. This rapid population growth is fueling our economy and stands as a testament to our city’s competitive standing in Canada and across the globe.

As Calgary’s population grows, our municipal government must proactively address the challenges that come with it to ensure we maintain our competitive edge. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Calgary has dropped from 5th to the 18th most liveable city globally, in large part due to strains on infrastructure, the cost of housing, public safety and access to health care. Housing, transportation, infrastructure, parks, pathways, roads and communities are the foundations of a vibrant city for residents and businesses alike to thrive and prosper.

We must plan boldly for the next 10, 25 and 50 years, anticipating future needs and making strategic investments today that will set up future generations for success. While two-thirds of Calgarians believe the city is on the right track for the next decade, only 41 per cent are confident we are ensuring a high quality of life for the future.

Through extensive consultation with our members, we have identified key actions our incoming municipal government must take to drive our economy into the future – leveraging what matters to business to build a prosperous, productive and innovative city that works to the benefit of all Calgarians.

The 2025 Municipal Election represents an opportunity for the incoming Mayor and Council to set a bold vision for the city and make choices that serve Calgarians now while shaping the future of our city for decades to come. Much like it functions in the corporate sphere, between a Board and company management, the Mayor and Council must similarly direct City Administration to ensure the vision and plan set out for the City of Calgary are executed accordingly. The only way we have a vibrant and growing city is if we have a strong and resilient economy.

That’s why the Calgary Chamber has developed ***Business Matters: A vision for a thriving, inclusive and ambitious Calgary***. Comprised of 50 recommendations across four categories: building a competitive, safe, vibrant and connected economy, we share ideas and outline the case for why business matters to the prosperity of all Calgarians.

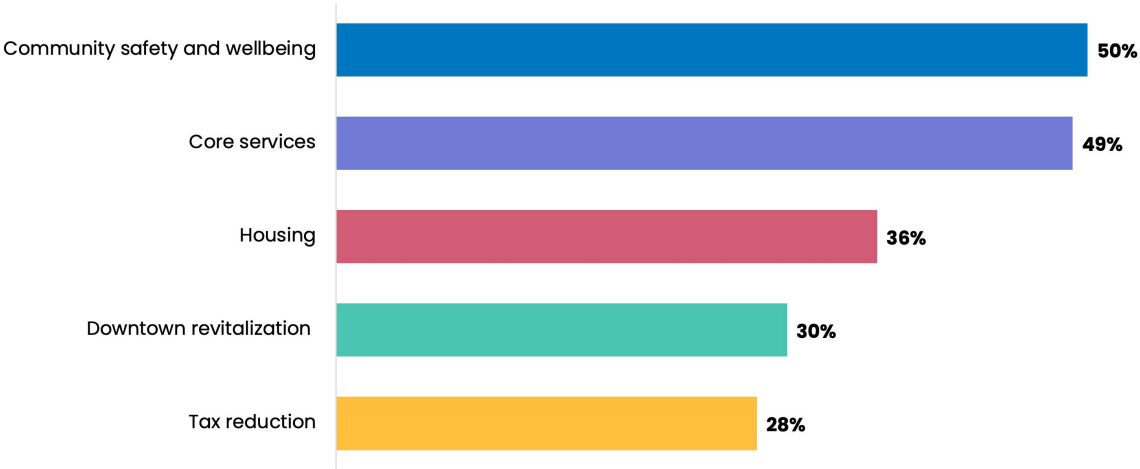
- Calgary is Canada’s fourth largest city, with the third most diverse population in the country.
- Calgary’s population grew by 18 per cent (220,000 people) from 2020 to 2024.
- Calgary has experienced a 1,000 per cent increase in venture capital investment since 2018.
- Approximately 95 per cent of businesses in Calgary are small businesses.
- Calgary has had the fastest tech employment growth in North America, up 78 per cent from 2018 to 2023.
- Calgary made the top five list of the best places to live and work as a filmmaker in 2025.
- Calgary’s tourism industry generates approximately \$2.91 billion in visitor spending from more than eight million tourists every year.

A platform for Calgary, by Calgary

This platform reflects broad and meaningful input from our members. Through surveys, roundtables and countless conversations, we’ve captured the diverse perspectives of Calgary’s business community. Informed by 1,500 members representing over 400,000 employees, this platform outlines a vision for a prosperous and vibrant Calgary.

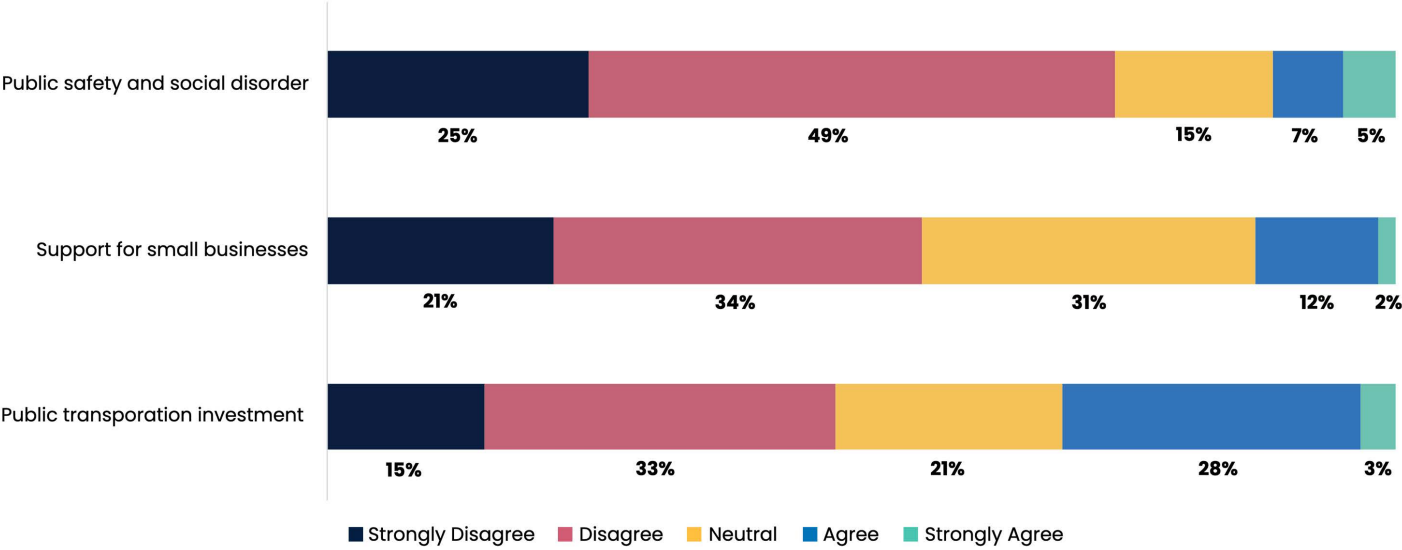
We asked our members to identify their top priorities for the next municipal government. Here’s what they said:

Top priorities for business



Source: Calgary Chamber of Commerce Member Survey, 2025.

Business satisfaction by topic



Source: Calgary Chamber of Commerce Member Survey, 2025.



Land acknowledgement

The Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta is comprised of the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy including the Siksika, the Piikani and the Kainai First Nations; the Tsuut’ina Nation; and the Stoney Nakoda including the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Goodstoney First Nations. Calgary is also home to Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Districts 5 and 6 and to many urban Indigenous people from across Turtle Island.

The Calgary Chamber encourages the City of Calgary to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, including the Seven Generations principle into its policy-making process. This long-term perspective, rooted in Indigenous wisdom, considers the impacts of decisions on the well-being of people, communities and the environment for the next seven generations, fostering sustainable and responsible growth for Calgary’s future.

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Competitiveness matters

Calgary must be a competitive, business-friendly policy environment to remain the best city to start, grow and scale a business. Doing so not only supports entrepreneurship, but strengthens the city’s economic base, broadens the tax revenue pool and increases capacity for reinvestment in public services. To attract companies across sectors and build on our city’s entrepreneurial spirit, we must create a more competitive property tax system, reduce red tape and bureaucratic burdens, and foster a shift towards a business-friendly culture within the City.

Achieving this requires strong, engaged and forward-thinking leadership on City Council, which must task Administration to proactively partner with the business community to streamline processes and champion reforms. To develop vibrant, prosperous communities, the City must embrace a business-matters mindset — one that operates at the speed of business and ensures unnecessary bureaucracy doesn’t hinder both opportunity and prosperity.

The cost of doing business continues to rise – 66 per cent of businesses indicated cost-related obstacles are the most significant issue impacting their operations. This is felt even more acutely by small businesses: 77 per cent of businesses with five to 19 employees indicate cost-related obstacles were an impediment to their growth. Our municipal government must take action to improve the competitiveness of Calgary’s business environment to offset the cost-related issues burdening Calgary businesses.



Red tape reduction & business-friendly culture

- 1. Simplify, clarify and accelerate the process to obtain municipal licenses and permits.** Promote and expand the Business Experience Improvement Program to help businesses navigate licensing and permitting processes, including through implementing a concierge service for businesses, creating considerable efficiency for businesses and the City. Businesses should be provided a case manager who acts as a single point of contact for permitting processes and addressing any issues with City regulations or processes. The City must also provide certainty and adhere to consistent and predictable response timelines to allow businesses to plan for the length of time expected for various approvals.
- 2. Elevate the Business and Local Economy Team within City Administration,** leveraging them to be cross-functional through all departments, directing Business and Local Economy (BLE) to considerably increase engagement and consultation with businesses, and provide strategic counsel to the City on key decisions impacting businesses and the economy. Empower the BLE team to add a business lens to all City matters.
- 3. Create user-friendly and customized tools to support seamless engagement with local businesses.** The use of a well-designed app to contact your Councillor, 311, find your estimated time to speak to Council, and receive updates on various permits, approvals and safety reports would be valuable and align with small business' limited capacity and flexibility. Additionally, the City should implement an online feedback tool that enables businesses to share input with the City regarding processes or duplicative regulations. For every business, large and small, delays in permits or longer timelines for approvals means lost revenues.

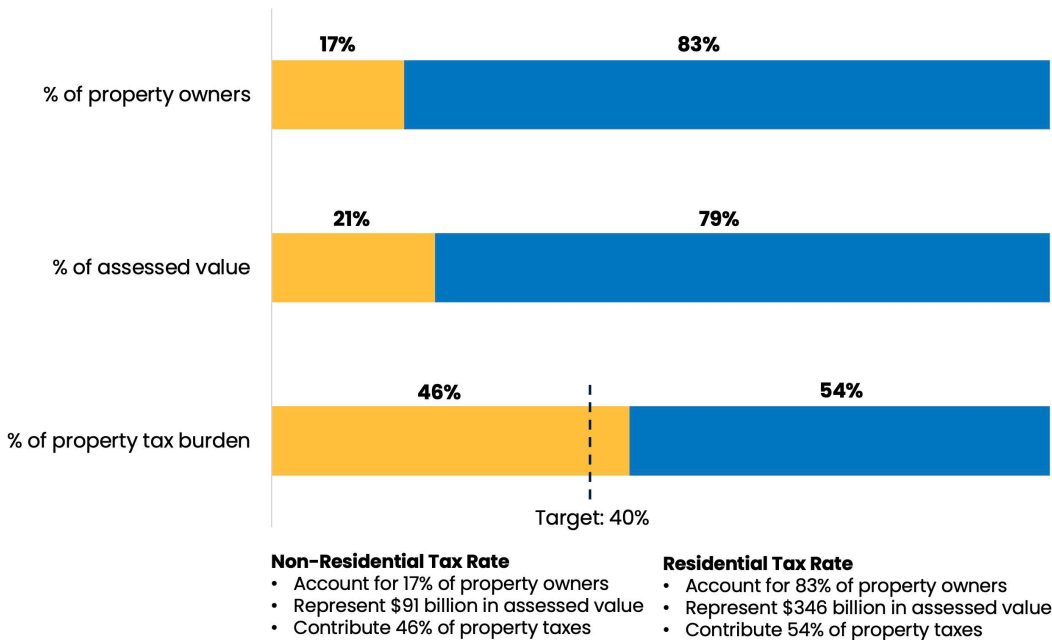
Tax fairness & fiscal responsibility

- 1. City Council must direct Administration to find further efficiencies to decrease duplicative or growing costs.** Noting the work already completed, where Administration located approximately \$1 million in cost savings, continue this initiative to lower costs and increase productivity in the public service. Consider the implementation of AI and new technologies, where possible, to drive efficiency and productivity across Administration.
- 2. Close Calgary's \$436 million municipal fiscal gap for capital and operating needs, ensuring critical priorities are fully funded.** Continue working to secure provincial and federal investment for projects essential to Calgary's success to reduce pressure on city finances, particularly for cross-jurisdictional initiatives. Work with other municipalities, civic partners and industry to strengthen advocacy and explore feasible alternative revenue sources. In addition, the City should examine new and diversified revenue and funding streams to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability and reduce reliance on property taxes.
- 3. The City of Calgary must rebalance residential and non-residential property tax rates,** adopting incremental, annual shifts until the City achieves a 60-40 split between residential and non-residential tax burdens. This will support small businesses, attract further investment in the city, boost tax revenue, stimulate economic growth and drive community vibrancy. Despite this shift, increases to non-residential rate payers will be offset by population growth and a cooling housing market, and therefore will have minimal impact on residents.



The Business Case for Property Tax Redistribution

Calgary’s population is growing extremely rapidly, with nearly 220,000 more residents than in 2020. However, we are not seeing the same growth rate in businesses. Calgary is home to approximately 11,000 non-residential property taxpayers with a physical footprint. As Calgary’s population – and number of residential properties increases – the tax burden is shared by a growing number of account holders. This has not been the case for businesses, as the open rate for businesses has remained relatively low, putting pressure on businesses to cover a significant share of property taxes.

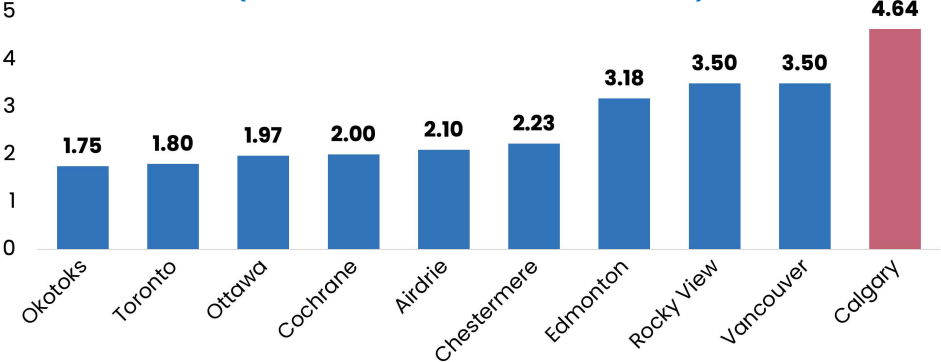


Source: City of Calgary, 2025.

The 2025 municipal property tax share between residential and non-residential properties illustrated above puts our tax ratio at 4.64:1. **That means, for every dollar of assessed value, a non-residential property owner will pay 4.64 times as much as a residential property owner.** Per the *Municipal Government Act*, the property tax ratio cannot exceed 5:1, and the City must view this as a ceiling, not a target. To stay under this legislated maximum, the City of Calgary must continue shifting the tax burden, committing to incremental annual shifts of two per cent for the next three years until we reach the targeted 60-40 balance.

Year	Residential	Non-Residential
2025	54%	46%
2026	56%	44%
2027	58%	42%
2028	60%	40%

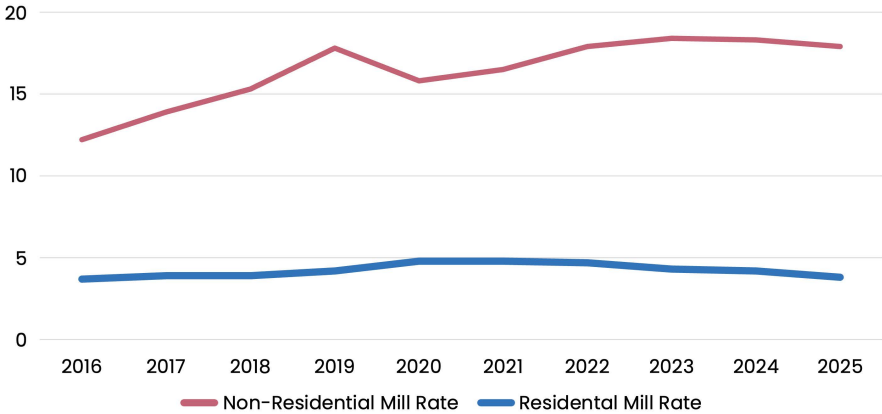
Tax ratio by municipality
(Residential to Non-Residential)



Source: City of Calgary, 2025.

Rebalancing property tax rates will decrease operational costs for businesses, ensuring they can grow and scale, and are not subject to volatile and unpredictable tax hikes. Calgary’s non-residential to residential tax ratio is among the least business-friendly in Canada, particularly across major metro regions, nearby municipalities and comparable jurisdictions. By building upon the tax shift approved in November 2023, the City of Calgary can support small businesses, attract further investment in the city, boost tax revenue, stimulate economic growth and drive community development. This can all be achieved with minimal impact to affordability for residents, in large part because our population growth will offset the shift, with the tax burden on residents shared across more people – and due to a cooling housing market where property values (and therefore taxes) do not continue climbing at an unsustainable rate.

Municipal mill rates
(excluding provincial)



Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-residential mill rate	12.2	13.9	15.3	17.8	15.8	16.5	17.9	18.4	18.3	17.9
Residential mill rate	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.3	4.2	3.8
Ratio	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.3	3.4	3.8	4.3	4.4	4.6

Source: City of Calgary, 2025.

Note: Mill rate refers to the amount of tax payable per dollar of assessed value.



Business-friendly construction policy & supports

- 1. **Implement a business-friendly construction policy** ensuring that impacted businesses are an integral part of the consultation and engagement process for construction projects. Communicating the impacts of road, sidewalk and utility disruptions, providing realistic timelines and coordinating work between different departments is critical to ensure that impacts to businesses’ operations can be mitigated to the highest degree possible.
- 2. **Provide direct financial support for businesses impacted by construction.** The City of Calgary’s offer of one-time \$5,000 taxable grants for businesses impacted by construction in specific areas (e.g. Marda Loop and Bridgeland main streets) is appreciated, however does little to assuage the financial impact of ongoing projects. Construction in these areas – and many others – has an intermittent or ongoing impact to businesses. The City of Montreal provides up to \$40,000 per fiscal year in financial assistance to businesses impacted by major city infrastructure work, and Quebec City provides up to \$30,000. The City of Calgary should assess the impacts of construction to business operations and provide commensurate financial compensation.

The recent Marda Loop construction delays are a clear example of how poor planning and communication can undermine small businesses — driving down revenues, eroding community vibrancy, and reinforcing the concerns of the 57 per cent of people who feel the City is not doing enough to support small businesses. In Marda Loop, restaurants have lost critical patio seasons, retailers along 33rd and 34th Avenue have seen customer traffic disappear behind fencing and detours, and long-standing shops have been forced to shut their doors. This underscores the need for the City to provide timely project updates, establish clear detour and parking plans, and implement targeted supports to help businesses weather major construction disruptions. These closures must serve as a lesson for upcoming infrastructure work in communities like Inglewood, Kensington and along the Green Line corridor, where similar challenges could devastate local businesses if not proactively addressed.

- 3. **Establish a specialized procurement concierge service within City Administration to assist local businesses in navigating the RFP and procurement process.** This service should proactively engage with businesses to understand their operations, connect them with competitive opportunities, and help remove barriers to participation. By adopting and scaling existing innovative procurement tools, the City can further support local businesses in successfully participating in its procurement processes. In addition, by awarding smaller, low risk contracts where appropriate, the City can deliver cost-effective solutions to Calgarians, help businesses build credibility and a proven track record, enhance supplier diversity, and generate lasting economic and social value in communities across Calgary.
- 4. **Continue to support civic partners by ensuring access to predictable and sustainable funding,** including for Calgary Arts Development Authority, Tourism Calgary, Calgary Economic Development, Platform Calgary and others. We recommend the City work collaboratively with civic partners to ensure agreed upon consistent, tangible and measurable key performance indicators for the allocation of funding.
- 5. **Work with businesses to review grant and funding programs** to ensure their application and fund dispersion timelines are aligned with common business operating schedules. This will ensure available supports can be accessed by businesses and are disbursed in a timely enough manner to be useful.

Skills & talent

- 1. **Develop a comprehensive talent attraction strategy.** Informed by industry, post-secondary institutions, and provincial and federal partners, the City should deploy a fulsome talent attraction strategy. Geopolitical dynamics are shifting, and Calgary can take advantage of this to attract skilled talent to our city. By engaging with industry to understand the labour needs today and in the future, the City should develop a plan that will fuel the further growth and diversification of Calgary’s economy.
- 2. **Work with provincial and federal partners to align immigration targets** with the needs of businesses across the city, ensuring businesses have the talent needed to grow and scale, and newcomers are set up for success and can find relevant employment soon after their arrival.



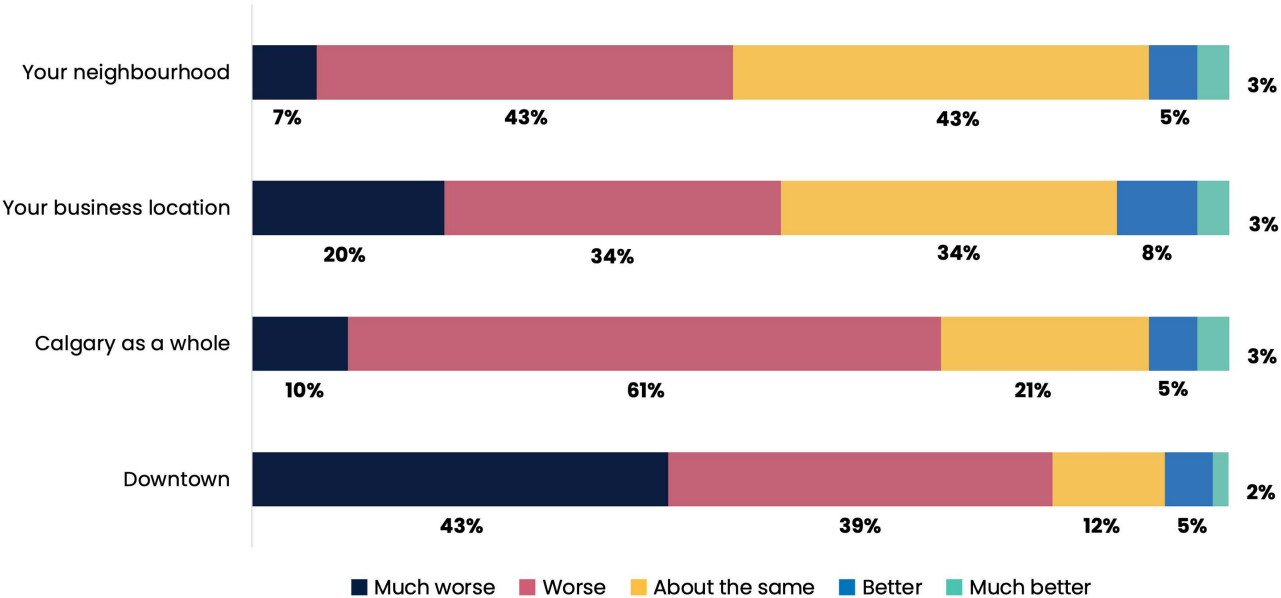
Safety matters

Creating a safe and welcoming city matters to Calgarians and visitors, and must be a top priority for our next municipal government. Beyond the critical social benefits, investing in public safety strengthens the local economy, supports businesses and protects the city’s fiscal health by reducing long-term costs associated with crime and social disorder. Businesses across Calgary continue to feel the effects of both real social disorder and perceptions of declining public safety. While some indicators suggest crime rates are falling, these numbers often do not match the daily experiences of businesses or their visitors, in part due to underreporting. To help our downtown thrive, the City must urgently address both real and perceived safety concerns.

Public safety and social disorder aren’t confined to downtown, with communities across the city facing increasing challenges in recent years. The City must act quickly to address both the root causes and immediate effects of social disorder. For businesses to succeed, customers and employees must both feel safe and be safe.

Our members cite community safety and wellbeing as the top issue they would like to see addressed by the City, with public safety seen as one of the top three barriers facing businesses. Further, 76 per cent of respondents do not think the City is doing enough to address public safety, and the Calgary Foundation’s [2024 annual survey](#) found 78 per cent of Calgarians don’t feel safe walking alone downtown after dark. Solutions to these challenges must be prioritized for Calgary to be successful, and our next municipal government must act urgently and boldly to address Calgary’s safety, community wellbeing and social order issues. Without significant action, investment and talent risk moving to other jurisdictions.

Public Safety Perception Change in the Last Five Years



Source: Calgary Chamber of Commerce, 2025.

Public safety & social order

- 1. Immediately fund the complete implementation of the initiatives outlined in the Downtown Safety Leadership Table report**, with a particular focus on recommendations to support a state of good repair and community safety, improvements that enhance cleanliness and physical safety infrastructure, and a review of the current state of assets, safety, useability and accessibility.
- 2. Ensure appropriate resources are being deployed**, including psychiatric nurses, social workers, community support workers, and other mental health professionals. Collaborate with provincial and industry partners in policing, mental health and addictions to address public safety, social disorder and criminal issues.
- 3. Continue to meaningfully address public safety on Calgary Transit**, working with provincial partners to deploy the resources necessary to provide a safe and comfortable experience on Calgary Transit trains, platforms, buses and public spaces around transit. Prioritize funding for overnight access and intake social service providers such as warming and cooling centres to reduce the need for individuals to shelter on public transit systems.
- 4. Address systemic issues driving public and social disorder**, working in conjunction with both federal and provincial governments as public drug use, violent crime and social disorder are issues across Alberta and Canada. The City should look to collaborate with other jurisdictions and governments to find best practices for addressing these challenges.
- 5. Provide micro-grants for small businesses to invest in safety and security improvements.** Grants should support businesses in purchasing CCTV systems, height strips and lighting improvements in parking areas. This program should be paired with an education campaign to ensure businesses and the public know how they can reduce the incidence and impact of crime.
- 6. Develop a police report tracking application** that can provide businesses and Calgarians with relevant, up-to-date information on the status of police reports they have filed. This will help encourage people to report incidents and have confidence that reported issues are being followed up on.
- 7. Continue to promote positive engagement and interactions in public spaces** – including transit stations – by collaborating with local businesses to activate public spaces through events such as reoccurring markets, retail pop-ups, art installations or musical and theatrical performances.

People overwhelmingly believe we have been moving in the wrong direction on **public safety** and **social disorder** over the past five years, and **76 per cent** do not think the City is doing enough to address public safety.

Services for Calgarians

- 1. Create a bylaw prohibiting open-air drug use.** Open-air drug use is currently a Criminal Code offence, but prosecuting every case is not practical and rarely delivers long-term community safety. It also places significant strain on enforcement resources and the courts. Treating open-air drug use as a bylaw infraction would allow offenders to be fined and directed into the Calgary Community Court system.
- 2. The City of Calgary should commit to expanded, long-term funding for the Community Court program** that is responsive to the capacity needs of the court service. People who are issued bylaw infraction tickets can go to the Community Court, where they are connected with relevant services and supports that are relevant to their current context. Once they have attended court and processed through the services their bylaw ticket will be withdrawn.
 - The Calgary Community Court served more than 400 people in its first year of operations and withdrew more than 2,000 bylaw infraction tickets.
 - A similar program in Seattle returned significantly improved results as compared to a control group – a 66 per cent decrease in recidivism.
- 3. Expand Calgary’s available day spaces.** In 2025, Calgary saw the dedication of two year-round day spaces with the City of Calgary committing \$1.1 million per year over the next two years to support their operation. Funding for day spaces will be incredibly valuable to support people experiencing homelessness and long-term funding should be allocated. Providing day spaces for people across the city will reduce pressure on libraries, parks and public transit, improving both perceptions of safety in public spaces and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

- 4. Provide funding for individual storage lockers for people experiencing homelessness.** For Calgarians without a safe place to store their belongings, every day can mean carrying everything they own – adding physical strain, mental stress and vulnerability to theft. Without secure storage, steps like attending a job interview or accessing services become much more difficult. By offering safe, accessible storage, the City can provide stability, restore dignity, improve cleanliness in public spaces, and create better conditions for individuals to transition out of homelessness. A comparable program in San Diego run in partnership with a local non-profit provides secure storage for people experiencing homelessness and connects them with appropriate services. Since 2011, this program has successfully assisted more than 500 people gaining employment and obtaining housing.
- 5. Complete an audit of public spaces that could benefit from upgrades following principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).** Building on work already being completed, develop a comprehensive understanding of public spaces throughout the city that could benefit from upgrades aligned with second generation CPTED principles. This includes building community capacity to conduct safety audits and working with local partners to create safe, engaging spaces where anyone can gather and participate in positive activities.
- 6. Expand staffed public washroom facilities in high foot traffic areas throughout the city.** Based on the success of the Public Washroom Attendant Program, increase access to safe and clean washroom facilities. Access to hygienic facilities contributes to improved perceptions of public safety and promotes dignity for all Calgarians.





Vibrancy matters

A vibrant city is one where people feel connected to their communities. They eagerly participate in local life, whether through public spaces like parks and recreation facilities or through local businesses such as coffee shops, breweries, retailers and restaurants that define a city’s character. Developing walkable neighbourhoods and communities increases foot traffic, improving safety and increasing vibrancy. We must develop a city that reflects Calgary’s diversity and the diverse needs and wants of its residents and businesses.

Building vibrancy requires coordinated effort and long-term vision from all levels of government, community organizations and the private sector. Investments in public infrastructure, accessible housing, arts and culture, tourism, and our nighttime economy all directly contribute to the energy and appeal of Calgary’s communities, making them desirable places to live and launch businesses. These investments in turn strengthen the local economy, generate city revenues and enable sustainable public services.

Strategic investments in infrastructure must not only meet the needs of today but also anticipate the challenges of tomorrow. Incorporating long-term, intergenerational thinking – such as the Seven Generations principle – into municipal decision-making will help ensure sustainable, responsible growth for Calgary’s future.

Calgary has dropped from **5th** to **18th** most livable city globally, in large part due to strains on infrastructure, the cost of housing, public safety and access to health care.

Housing

- 1. Continue to action the Calgary Housing Strategy to address housing affordability.** Increase and accelerate the supply of housing by lowering the direct and indirect costs of new builds and reducing government charges where appropriate. This includes selling city-owned land at below-market value to non-profit housing providers, committing capital to construct affordable housing, deploying financial and tax-based incentives where appropriate, and developing more efficient processes for approvals and permitting.
- 2. Decrease government charges on new developments and reduce timelines for approvals.** Decreasing these charges where appropriate will improve the economics of housing development. By providing fast, predictable and efficient approvals, including permitting processes, businesses can plan their labour and resources more reliably, reducing costs incurred from waiting for permit issuance. The City should also ensure processes are adaptable and modernized to accommodate innovative construction methods such as modular housing.
- 3. Create a practical and predictable land use bylaw.** This will give developers the certainty they need to develop appropriate housing at scale and ensure housing affordability and access are leading considerations in land use regulation. This aligns with outcome 1.C.5.i of the *Home is Here* strategy.
- 4. Leverage innovative technological solutions such as drones and AI to increase the efficiency of teams delivering inspection services.** This will decrease wait times, improving predictability of decisions and productivity across the City.
- 5. Continue to support the office conversion program for both market and non-market housing options.** According to the *2025 State of Downtown Report*, this program has created homes for over 2,400 people, as well as increased downtown property assessed values by \$1.8 billion since 2022, attracted more than \$3.50 of private investment for every \$1 of public funding, and promoted affordability, with 20 per cent of approved housing units as low cost or below-market housing. Conversions have proven to deliver vibrancy, safety and needed housing density, and should be expanded for both market and non-market options.



Public infrastructure

- 1. Secure provincial and federal support to immediately begin development of the Foothills Multisport Fieldhouse project.** Recognizing investments in civic spaces are a competitive advantage in talent attraction by enhancing Calgary's livability and community vibrancy, and improving our ability to host major sporting events, this project, approved by Council in July 2023, should be a priority. Alongside the Fieldhouse, a modern stadium with sufficient seating capacity is needed to host large scale events and strengthen Calgary's position as a premier destination for world-class competitions and entertainment.
- 2. Prioritize the completion of the Indigenous Gathering Place at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers.** Recognizing Calgary is the only large Canadian city without a dedicated Indigenous cultural space – and home to the fifth-largest urban Indigenous population – its completion will provide a permanent home for Indigenous culture and ceremony, strengthen community connections, and contribute to Calgary's social and cultural vibrancy, while advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Call to Action #21](#).
- 3. Continue supports for office to post-secondary conversion in the downtown core.** This should include additional financial and tax-based incentives that will support the expansion or relocation of post-secondary institutions and residence buildings to Calgary's downtown, recognizing additional funding mechanisms will be required to successfully advance these projects. Relocating students into the downtown core creates significant value, is additive to both economic activity and vibrancy, improves real and perceived safety with more people downtown outside of core office hours, and provides greater part-time employment opportunities for students.



Arts & culture

- 1. Coordinate with civic partners to create paid programs for emerging local artists, musicians and performers to work in public spaces throughout the city,** producing public art, playing music and performing. This will improve civic vibrancy, increase foot traffic in public areas and support local artists, further strengthening our arts and culture economy and talent pipeline.
- 2. Continue support for Calgary's arts and culture sector.** In 2023, Calgary Arts Development supported 193 local not-for-profit arts organizations that collectively generated \$168 million in GDP, supported nearly 1,400 full-time jobs and contributed \$31 million in tax revenue to municipal, provincial and federal governments. The arts and culture sector is an economic driver in Calgary, contributing to our local economy, employing over 45,000 Calgarians and making our city a desirable place to live.
- 3. Develop a Nighttime Economy Strategy.** To support the growth of Calgary's nighttime economy – from arts and culture to hotels, food and beverage, and other leisure and hospitality businesses – a comprehensive strategy with measurable outcomes and accountabilities should be implemented. In Calgary, approximately 38 per cent of transactions at bars, cafes and restaurants occur between 7:00pm and 4:00am, however many businesses are impeded by safety concerns, limited transit schedules and access to labour. A citywide strategy should encourage later hours not only for hospitality venues but also for street-level retail, especially during summer evenings and weekends, to boost vibrancy and foot traffic, and improve the perception of safety in the evenings.



Connectivity matters

Connection – physical and digital – has always been one of Calgary’s greatest strengths. From our position as a gateway to the Rocky Mountains, to our strategic links by rail, air and highways, and our historic role as a gathering place at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers, connectedness has long shaped our success – but it’s not something that can be taken for granted.

For Calgary businesses to grow and scale, they must be connected to well-designed infrastructure. This includes physical networks – public transit, active transportation and roads that move employees and customers – and digital networks that keep businesses and workers connected in an increasingly digital economy. Investments in connectivity generate significant economic and social returns, while making Calgary a city that people want to work, live and invest in. As Calgary continues to grow, we must maintain existing infrastructure while designing and delivering new projects quickly and strategically.

The Business Case: Public Transit Infrastructure

Calgary’s infrastructure funding gap is significant, per a 2020 report where the funding required was estimated at \$7.73 billion – and growing. A sustainable long-term plan to address this gap, while investing in connectivity and infrastructure has the potential to drive economic growth through direct job creation and spin-off economic and social benefits:

- For every \$1 billion dollars invested in public infrastructure, the Province of Ontario received \$1.7 billion in tax revenue, and the return on real GDP was eight times higher than predicted by traditional economic models per a study from the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis.
- Transit projects provide a significant benefit to Canada’s economy, contributing \$19 billion annually, reducing the economic cost of traffic collisions by \$3.2 billion and saving \$137 million in annual healthcare costs.
- Active transportation projects, including expanding or improving our existing pathway network, results in improved health outcomes for Calgarians, more inclusive communities, cost savings and a cleaner environment with more natural spaces.

Active transportation & public transit

1. **Improve access to transit to increase economic opportunities**, support densification along transit corridors and decrease urban sprawl. Vibrant cities have great public transit that all people can take advantage of, connecting them to employment, businesses, services and opportunities across the city. Studies from comparable North American cities, including Seattle and Memphis show that 87 per cent of public transportation trips connected riders with employment.
2. **Improve service delivery for existing public transit**, increasing service hours, frequency and expanded on-demand service for bus routes as demand dictates, and investigating expanded BRT lines in communities across the city.
3. **Invest in improved active transportation infrastructure across the city**. This includes maintaining Calgary’s pathway network in good repair and ensuring it is cleared of snow and ice promptly, expanding pathways to reach more neighborhoods and businesses, and continuing support for the city’s bike lane system, which delivers significant economic and social returns. In addition, supporting last-mile transportation options, such as e-scooters and e-bikes, can help make active travel more accessible and convenient for all Calgarians.
4. **Advance transportation infrastructure beyond Calgary**, working collaboratively with other levels of governments to connect the Calgary Airport to downtown, build a rail line connecting Calgary to Banff, and develop a conventional rail line between Calgary and Edmonton. These investments will enhance Calgary as an international convention and event center, improve liveability for Calgarians, and promote environmental and safety outcomes.
5. **Work with provincial and federal partners to develop an underground alignment for the Green Line through downtown that works for businesses, communities and riders**. The impact of an elevated alignment would be considerable to many businesses, with temporary and permanent lost revenue due to lack of access, noise concerns, construction disruptions, poor foot-traffic under the track, and perceived safety impacts. From a cost and economic perspective, an elevated alignment would also significantly reduce tax revenue, both by forgoing the ability to collect revenue on stranded properties, and by decreasing the tax base as surrounding properties are deemed to drop in value. An elevated alignment would also impede the City’s ability to make progress on downtown safety and urban vibrancy.

87 per cent of public transportation trips connected riders with employment.

The Business Case: An Underground Alignment for the Green Line

The impact of an elevated alignment is significant, in both direct and indirect costs, foregone property tax revenue, legal risks and vibrancy.

- The current \$6.2 billion estimate for an elevated alignment does not account for \$1.3 billion in known and sunk costs and risks for an underground alignment. This means that the potential cost savings for completing an elevated alignment – also evaluated at \$1.3 billion – as compared to an underground alignment are negligible.
- An elevated alignment would significantly decrease property tax revenue, as it would significantly impede, if not eliminate, all future development along the route. Property tax collection would be eliminated on office buildings, residential towers, businesses and homes along 46 kilometers of right-of-way, much of which is in downtown – the highest assessment values in Calgary.
- The elevated alignment would also decrease current property values (and taxation commensurately) throughout a large portion of downtown, requiring these taxes to be collected elsewhere within the City’s assessment base. An elevated alignment would also limit future growth for businesses along the proposed alignment, impacting potential future business development and property tax revenues.
- Businesses have already been impacted by work to prepare for an underground alignment. Phase 1 construction, which occurred from September 2022 to October 2024 involved significant disruptions for businesses as the City removed and relocated potential utility conflicts. While these were relatively short term, the long-term and permanent loss in access to businesses along the elevated alignment during construction and operation would be devastating for many businesses.
- In a city that is already facing major concerns around public safety, crime and social disorder, an elevated alignment would only increase the potential for crime in affected areas where visibility and sunlight are reduced, such as under elevated structures.

*The original proposal for **Green Line**, drafted in 2010, noted that Calgary would need this transit service before reaching a population of **1.25 million**. Calgary’s population now exceeds this by over **35%**.*

6. **Begin work immediately to design and plan the Green Line service to Eau Claire, north across the Bow River and continuing to 160th Avenue North.** The original proposal for Green Line, drafted in 2010, noted that Calgary would need this transit service before reaching a population of 1.25 million. 15 years later, our city now has an estimated population of nearly 1.7 million, and growing traffic congestion impacts businesses and citizens everyday, driving down productivity and placing a burden on our public infrastructure. Municipal, provincial and federal governments must work expeditiously to plan and construct a well-designed Green Line alignment that services the entire city from Seton to 160th Avenue North.
7. **Expand the Free Fare Zone from Sunalta to the Franklin stations on the Blue Line and the SAIT/ACAD/ Jubilee and Erlton Stations on the Red Line.** Public transit is a driver of economic and social mobility, connecting employees to employers, students to schools, and people to services. Connections to the Calgary Zoo on the Blue line and Jubilee on the Red Line would improve Calgary’s tourism experience, allowing visitors to travel more easily throughout Calgary’s cultural areas. Expanding the Free Fare Zone would also allow vulnerable Calgarians to more easily access vital supports and services beyond downtown.
8. **Continue support for the Low-Income Transit Pass.** For some, cost is a barrier to accessing transit, and Calgarians need affordable, reliable transportation to get to work, access services and participate in the community. Affordable housing and accessible transit go hand-in-hand; if lower-cost housing is in outlying neighbourhoods but residents cannot reach jobs or essential services, the benefit of affordability is lost. Increasing access to transit drives economic growth – connecting employers to staff, businesses to customers and communities to each other.
9. **Provide free street and municipal lot parking** during evenings, weekends and holidays to attract more visitors year-round. This initiative would reduce barriers for residents and tourists alike, supporting restaurants, retail, arts and cultural venues while driving sustained economic activity in Calgary’s core districts. This foregone revenue would be offset by increased economic activity and decreased security costs.





Decisions today matter tomorrow

We are at a critical time in Calgary’s history. The incoming City Council has the unique opportunity to set our city up for success in the next four years by setting and executing on a compelling vision and plan. We need our municipal government to prioritize the short-term actions that will address the pressing issues impacting Calgary’s business community, while planning for the long-term to ensure that Calgary is a prosperous, vibrant and connected city that works for the benefit of all Calgarians. By making strategic investments that strengthen the local economy, generate city revenues, and support sustainable public services, Calgary can create a foundation for both local economies and communities to thrive in perpetuity.

Developing an inclusive and vibrant city that promotes innovation, growth and entrepreneurship will require bold, evidence-based action that supports Calgary’s potential as a competitive, safe, vibrant and connected city.

To achieve our city’s full economic potential and ensure prosperity for generations, we must focus on what matters:

- Support a competitive business environment, balancing taxation, and striving for efficiency in city service delivery.
- Improve public safety – both perceived and real – by collaborating cross-jurisdictionally and making key investments in social services.
- Build a vibrant city with appropriate and affordable housing options, a thriving arts and culture sector, and sport infrastructure that attracts the talent our businesses need.
- Invest in connective infrastructure, from effective public transit, pathways and bike lanes to the digital infrastructure to keep Calgarians connected in an increasingly online economy.

Share your voice

To our business community, your voice matters. You play a critical role in informing your Calgary Chamber’s policy positions, and shaping our city’s future. We encourage you to engage with policymakers, share your concerns and advocate for the changes needed to secure a prosperous future for both businesses and the people of Calgary. Visit our [website](#) for ways to get involved and [share your voice](#) with your Calgary Chamber and with your elected officials and candidates. Together, we can create a more competitive, safe, vibrant and connected city that works for all Calgarians.

Digital infrastructure

1. **Ensure core infrastructure keeps pace with population growth in new communities**, working with the private sector to ensure Calgary’s network infrastructure, phone lines, transmission and distribution lines and network substations are in a state of good repair and have adequate capacity to serve our growing population.
2. **Assess the process for permitting new digital infrastructure**, including fiber optic and small cell infrastructure. The City of Calgary must provide certainty, efficiency and predictability in their permitting process for telecommunications and connectivity infrastructure, deploying fiber optic infrastructure at speed and scale throughout the city is imperative to ensure Calgarians are connected.

Supply chains

1. **Work with interested parties to develop stronger supply chain infrastructure, such as the Prairie Economic Gateway**. The Prairie Economic Gateway – a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the City of Calgary and Rocky View County – will establish a rail-served industrial inland port to bolster the region’s transportation infrastructure and connect Calgary to global markets. The project is projected to generate over \$7 billion in economic activity and create more than 30,000 jobs across the Calgary region over the next 10 to 12 years. By unlocking opportunities in manufacturing, logistics, processing and distribution, the Gateway enhances supply chain efficiency, supports regional diversification and lays the foundation for long-term economic resilience.
2. **Engage with federal and provincial partners to ensure Calgary is connected to the economic corridors that will support Calgary’s economy for generations to come**. Given the current momentum across the country to develop new large-scale projects including economic corridors, we must ensure that Calgary is positioned to take advantage of new and significant investments in nation-building projects such as trade enabling infrastructure, inter-city transportation and economic corridors.

BETTER TOGETHER.

The Calgary Chamber exists to empower our business community to advance a prosperous Calgary and Canada. As the convenor and catalyst for a vibrant, inclusive and prosperous business community, the Chamber works to build strength and resilience among our members and position Calgary as a magnet for talent, diversification and opportunity. As an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization founded in 1891, we build on our history to serve and advocate for businesses of all sizes, in all sectors across the city.



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