

Ward 9

GreenLine Station Design

Challenges & Opportunities

BY COUNCILLOR GIAN-CARLO CARRA
NOVEMBER 2023



Dear Mr. Bhatti,

This letter is presented to you at your request to outline a series of key challenges and opportunities associated with the current GreenLine station designs in Ward 9. These challenges and opportunities are grounded in the perspective I have as a 10+ year advocate and champion of the GreenLine in my role as the area's City Councillor, as well as my 20+ year role as an urban design professional working with East Calgary Communities towards the transit-oriented future we are now on the brink of achieving.

I have been consistent in my communication of these challenges and opportunities with you and Ms. Tynan since the beginning of your respective tenures, as well as with your predecessors, and many of your board members, notably Mr. Fairburn, Mr. Duckworth, and Mr. Beasley. I understand from you and Ms. Tynan that this is the appropriate and long-awaited time to present these ideas to you in writing as the GreenLine Team negotiates and finalizes building programs with our Development Partner, Bow Transit Connectors (BTC).

I am very pleased that we are at the stage of undertaking detailed design with a very capable development partner - this is a great place to be after years of buffeting from stiff political headwinds. However, as pleased as I am to be at this point, I am concerned that the GreenLine's city-shaping mandate has suffered as the necessity became securing the project's existence as opposed to a creative focus on exploring the next steps of city-shaping design work.

The fact is, that the public, interdisciplinary, urban design-based approach that initiated the project, devolved over these years into a closed-door and specialist-driven engineering focus. Due to this lack of transparency and collaboration, I have had extremely limited exposure to the design details forming the start of negotiations with Bow Transit Connectors. That said, my limited exposure is still enough to understand that there are real disconnects between some of the decisions that informed the RFP and achieving the principles that the City of Calgary committed to the public.

This discussion is not intended to materially challenge agreed upon boundaries between GreenLine and City of Calgary responsibilities in the delivery of this project; nor is it intended to materially change the scope of the GreenLine's responsibilities; instead it is intended to help focus your negotiations on the project's founding principles, to potentially allow for cost-neutral adjustments to Bow Transit Connectors deliverables, and ultimately, to facilitate as seamless an interface as possible between the delivery of the GreenLine and the best future for Ward 9 and the City of Calgary.

As such, I have structured the following discussion of challenges and opportunities into a review of two big-picture principles that form the basis of the GreenLine's enduring public support, followed by a station-by-station discussion of how these principles are at play in specific design challenges and opportunities.

Two Big Picture Principles

The GreenLine was so named due to Council and the public's conception of it as both a figurative and literal 'green line' connecting and building our city. As one example supporting this ideal, Council directed the public art budget of the GreenLine to be focused on landscape design. Two principles that were common refrains and promises at all the station area design charrettes were:

1 The GreenLine, wherever possible, will function as a linear park, anchored by a contiguous multi-use pathway, that:

Collects active modes access from surrounding communities and working landscapes and channels travelers towards the stations;

Provides physical and interpretive opportunities to connect with parks, natural spaces, and heritage landscapes along the line; and,

Creates real estate opportunities and value all along the line, particularly at station areas.

2 Every station area will be anchored by a public plaza that:

Provides multiple points of access to the station from the surrounding community;

Serves as a great public space that promotes formal and informal gathering; and,

Is framed by active built-form edges consisting of retail, residential, and institutional uses.

Regarding a contiguous multi-use path along the GreenLine right of way, the last time public consultation took place, the idea presented was that a best practice for modern LRT systems is to have a service road along the route that can also serve as a multi-use pathway. I understand that the GreenLine has backed away from delivering a functional multi-use path along the entirety of the route and that the City of Calgary has assumed that responsibility. It is however critical that the GreenLine and the development partner deliver a project that can accommodate a multi-use path. This is particularly critical regarding the design of:

- Bridges (there must be room to accommodate a MUP);
- Station Areas (access to plazas, station heads, and bicycle parking areas must be accommodated); and,
- Wherever grade changes or topography present challenges (where it is deemed necessary to have a MUP, design solutions must accommodate appropriate space).

Ramsay-Inglewood Station

The original placement of the Ramsay-Inglewood Station was to the west of the final bridge over 11 ST SE. It was moved eastwards to: place it closer to the density anticipated in the Brewery Rail Lands, utilize the existing underpass as the most effective way to improve active modes connectivity between Ramsay and Inglewood, and gain efficiencies by combining the required bridge, station, and north-south connections into one program.

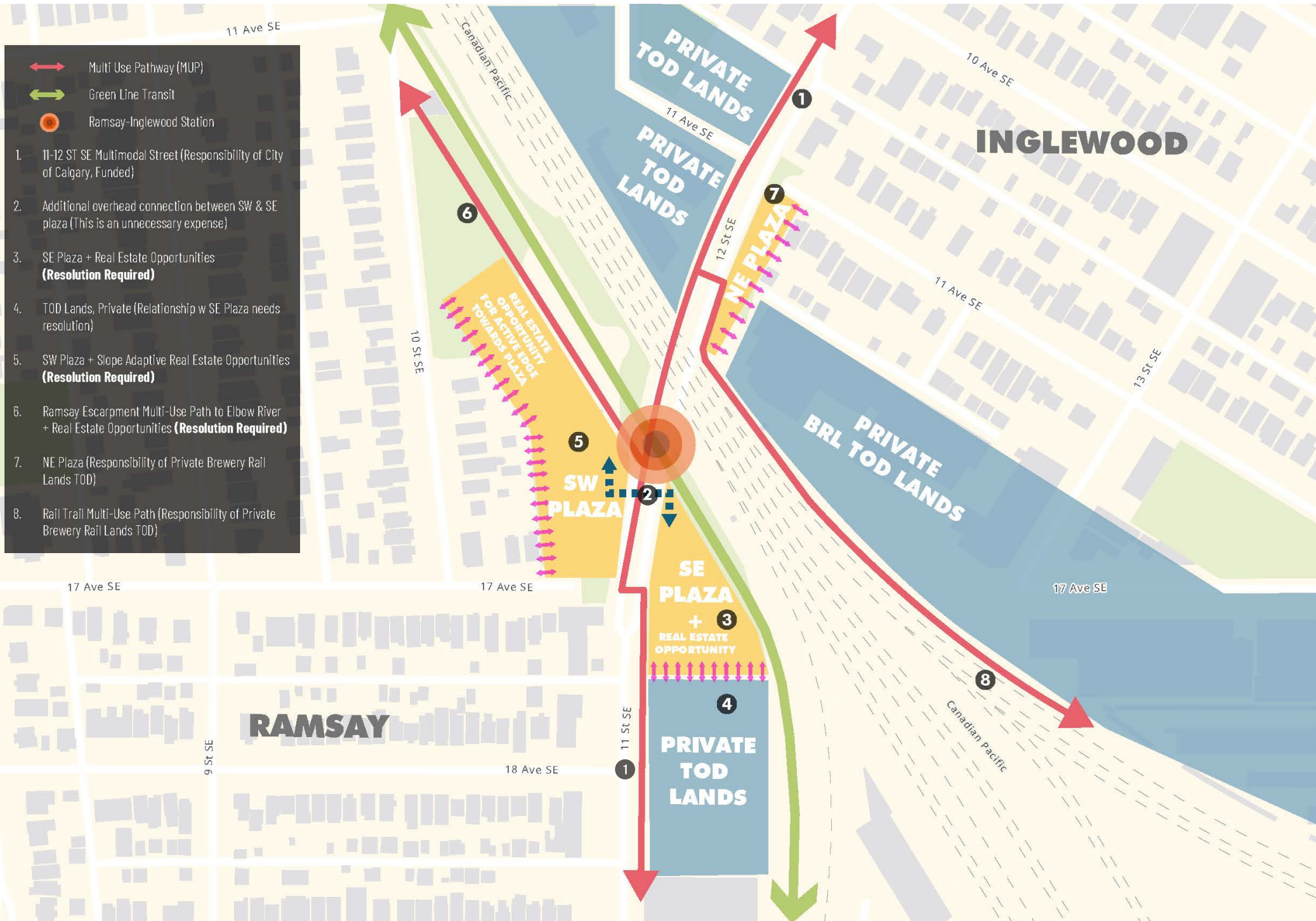
The decision to adjust the station location was made with a clear understanding that this most likely compromised the previously conceptualized ability of this station to act as a junction between the GreenLine and a future conversion of the MAXPurple to low-floor LRT.

The challenges I have with the RFP's station design are:

- The significant cost of an unnecessary additional pedestrian bridge over 11 ST SE to allow east-west movement separate from the fare-restricted platform.
- The lack of attention to north-south connectivity, which was a guiding principle of the station's placement;
- An undetermined east plaza size and design that fails to address real estate opportunities within the City-owned land, and interfaces with adjacent TOD-entitled privately owned parcels to the south;
- An undetermined west plaza size and design that fails to address multiple real estate interfaces with City and privately owned lands, as well as connectivity to 17 AV SE and 11 ST SE; and,
- Accommodation for the promised MUP westward along the GreenLine/Ramsay Escarpment to the Elbow River including real estate opportunities and community access points along that edge.

A final note on the Ramsay-Inglewood Station is that a relationship it shares with the Victoria Park Station to the west is their situation at two ends of Calgary's Music Mile; the design charrette discussed the plazas and the linear park connecting the two stations, incorporating live music opportunities.

Ramsay-Inglewood Station



26 Avenue SE Station

Crossroads-Hampstead Hill

The Crossroads-Hampstead Hill Station anchors the most significant GreenLine TOD opportunity in Ward 9 and perhaps anywhere along the entire line. Topography-related access represents the single largest challenge to realizing the full potential of the area, which comprises three large parcels under two ownerships. Both private parcels are owned by the Crossroads Market and the smaller of the two, fronting 26 AV SE on the west side of 11 ST SE, is critical to unlocking the full developability the largest of the three parcels, the City of Calgary-owned Hampstead Hill.

The current litigation between the Crossroads Market ownership and the GreenLine stems from consistent failure of the GreenLine to fulfill promises to collaboratively address access considerations. The need for a collaborative Masterplan that connects the larger station area with the actual station design is something that past leadership of the GreenLine has agreed is essential for success, and yet that work has never taken place. Five principles of design for the required integrated masterplanning of this station with its station area are:

- 11 ST SE must be treated as a full, four-way intersection allowing multimodal access onto both TOD parcels owned by the Crossroads Market to the east and west of the GreenLine - this will require:

Thoughtful adjustment of the placement of pillars supporting the elevated GreenLine as it crosses over 26 AV SE and into the station area;

Accommodating potential impacts to how northwards the station with its platform begins; and,

Accommodating potential impacts to the station plaza, which may be currently conceptualized as an at-grade frontage facing 11 ST SE;

- Multimodal intersection density/access to the TOD lands must be maximized all along 26 AV SE;
- The considerable topographical differences between the at-grade Crossroads Market land, the GreenLine Station located on a bench half-way up Hampstead Hill, and the vast developable area at the top of the hill must be shored by active, tax-base enhancing real estate opportunities and not by expensive and depreciating retaining walls;
- The nature of this station as a crossroads for active modes must be accommodated with particular attention paid to transitioning active modes from the multi-modal rebuild of 11 ST SE that the City will be delivering in 2024 to the accommodation on the grade-separated bridge crossing of Blackfoot Trail at the south end of the station; and,
- Delivery of this station today must also accommodate for its role as the future junction point for southbound GreenLine trains and eastbound PurpleLine trains.

26 Avenue SE Station Crossroads-Hampstead Hill



- Multi Use Pathway (MUP)
 - Green Line Transit
 - 26 Ave (Crossroads-Hampstead Hill) Station
1. 11-12 ST SE Multimodal Street (Responsibility of City of Calgary, Funded)
 2. 11 ST & 26 AV SE Four-Way Intersection (**Resolution Required**)
 3. 11 ST SE Access to Hampstead Hill TOD Lands (**Resolution Required**)
 4. Slope Adaptive TOD (**Buildings, not retaining walls - Resolution Required**)
 5. Green Line South-Bound Multi-Use Path with Crossing over Blackfoot Trail (**Resolution Required**)
 6. Barley Belt Trail Multi-Use Path (Responsibility of Private TOD Land)
 7. Future Purple Line Connection

Highfield-Bonnybrook Station

The Highfield-Bonnybrook Station is the only Ward 9 Station that did not have a public design charrette to establish design principles for its build-out. In part, this was due to the industrial nature of the surrounding lands and the associated lack of interested parties living in close proximity to the station, but it was also due to the fact that the Station Area Charrettes took place before the full remediation of the former landfill at this site was achieved.

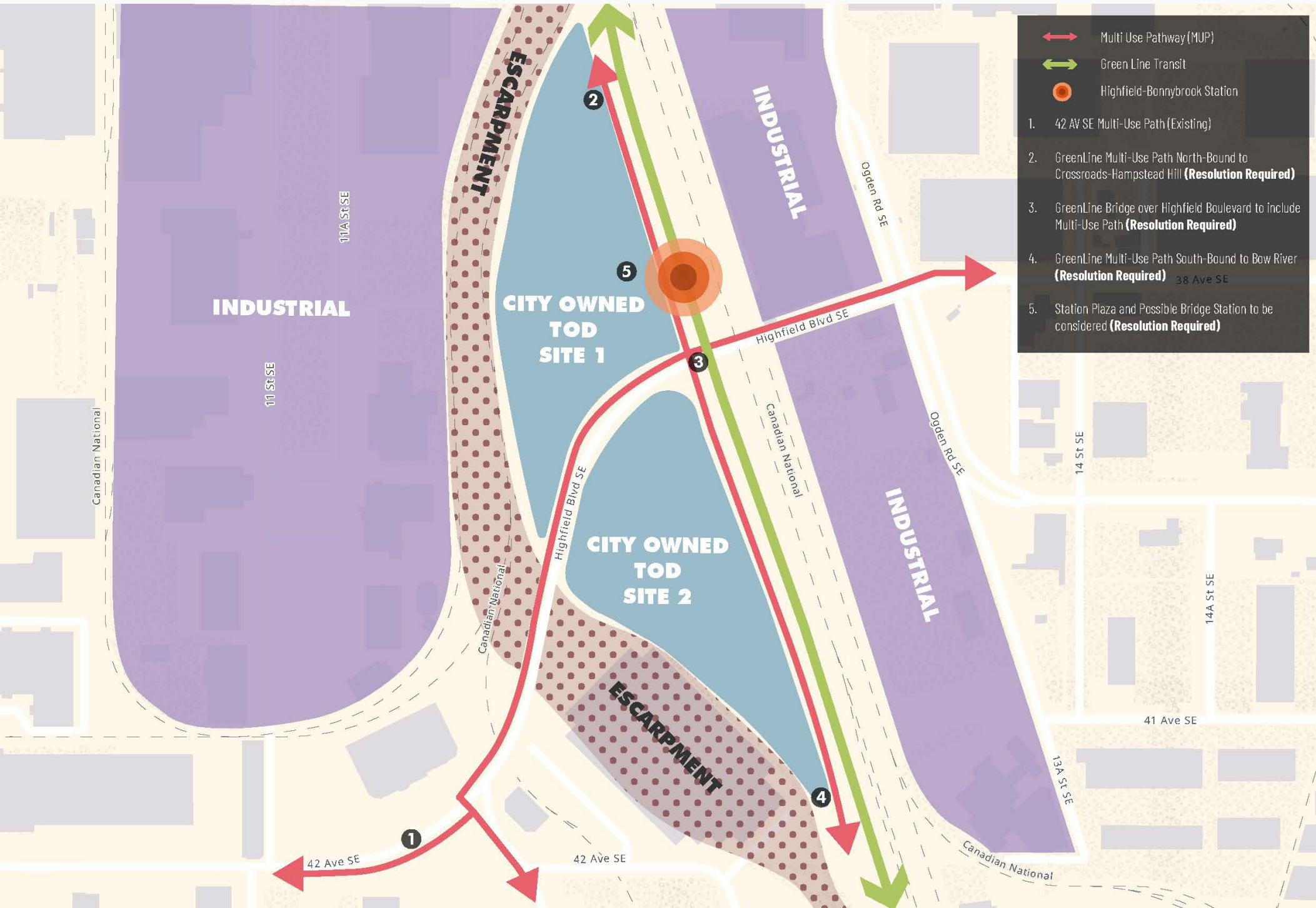
The opportunity for this site to provide an affordable workforce housing-oriented TOD neighbourhood close to the myriad employment opportunities of the area is a tremendous opportunity, especially in the context of our current housing crisis.

The single guiding principle I am advocating for in terms of securing maximum success for this TOD opportunity is active modes connectivity (this builds on Council's investment in the 42 AV SE MUP that serves this site):

- Within the site, the GreenLine bridge over Highfield Boulevard must be sized to connect both sides of the TOD opportunity as well as active mode connections both north and south;
- To the north, it is essential that the GreenLine MUP connects to the Crossroads-Hampstead Hill Station, and ultimately to Downtown Calgary via the multi-modal rebuild of 11 ST SE that the City will be delivering in 2024.
- To the South, the GreenLine MUP must extend to the Bow River pathway system (completing the river-to-river promise of the 42 AV MUP) as well as across the Bow River, connecting with employment opportunities in Ogden and beyond.

A final note on Highfield-Bonnybrook is that its station location was never vetted through a design charrette process. The rationale that resulted in a bridge station for Ramsay-Inglewood applies at this station location equally well and if there are cost savings to be realized through a similar treatment here, they should definitely be explored.

Highfield-Bonnybrook Station



Lynnwood-Millican Station

While the position of this station has been shifted to the east side of Ogden Road (a change that has not been shared with the public) its general purpose remains the same. It serves as:

- The bottom of the hill GreenLine Station for Ogdenites living in the northern portion of the community; and,
- The gateway to some of the most substantial green spaces along the line including:

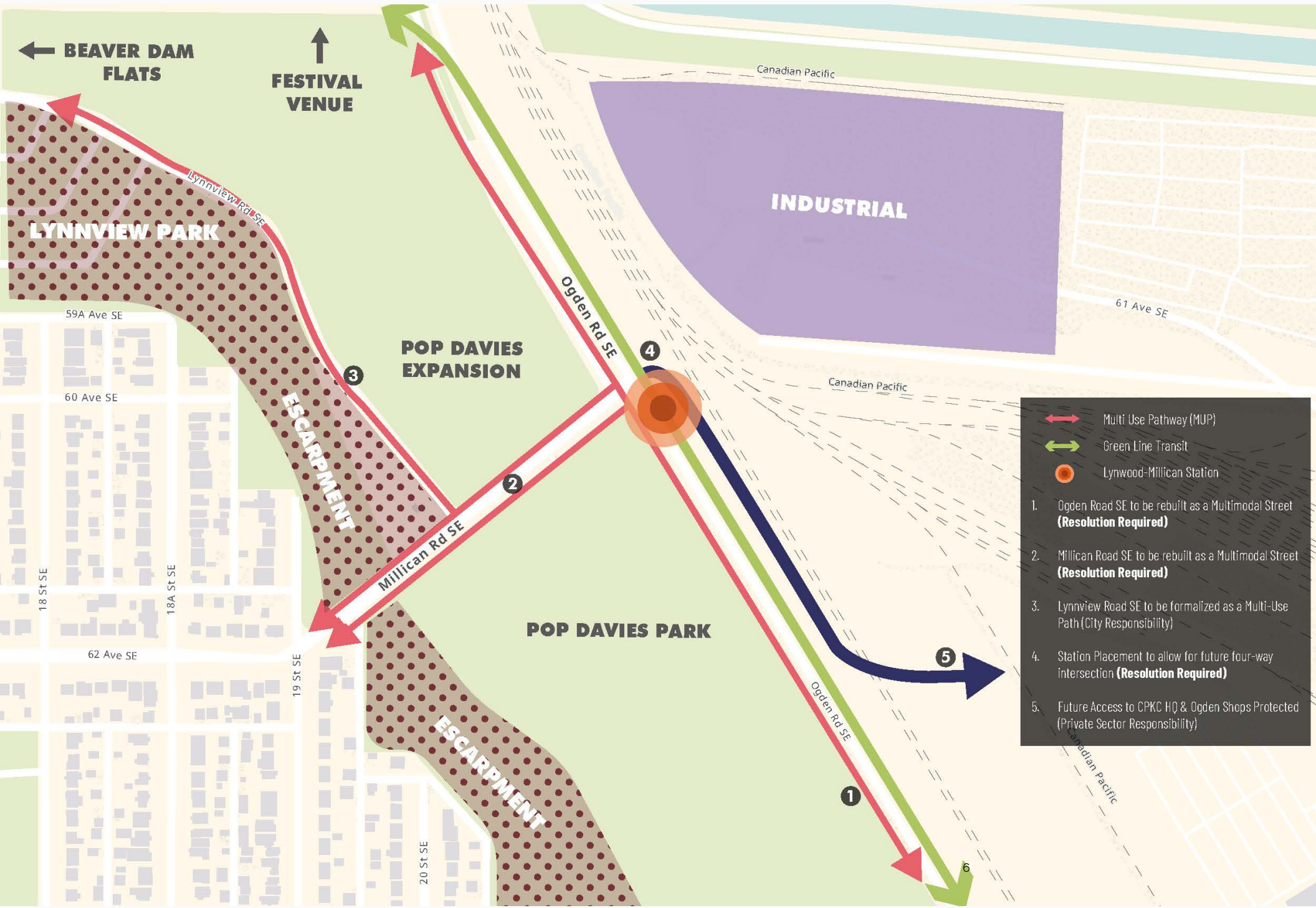
An expansion of the recreational fields of Pop Davie's Park;

The natural areas of Beaverdam Flats; and,

A Regional Park on reclaimed land at the former Imperial Oil Refinery that could become a needed major outdoor festival venue for the City of Calgary

An additional role for this station area that is an essential component of fully realizing the long-term TOD potential of the area, is as a third multimodal access point to the Ogden Shop Lands to the east. While it is definitely well outside of the scope of the GreenLine or the City of Calgary's mandates to deliver such a connection, it is essential to long-term city-building that Station design accommodates the potential for a future connection served by the station.

Lynnwood-Millican Station



Multi Use Pathway (MUP)
 Green Line Transit
 Lynnwood-Millican Station

- Ogden Road SE to be rebuilt as a Multimodal Street **(Resolution Required)**
- Millican Road SE to be rebuilt as a Multimodal Street **(Resolution Required)**
- Lynnview Road SE to be formalized as a Multi-Use Path (City Responsibility)
- Station Placement to allow for future four-way intersection **(Resolution Required)**
- Future Access to CPKC HQ & Ogden Shops Protected (Private Sector Responsibility)

Ogden Station

This will be the best station in the City of Calgary's entire primary transit network. The urban/TOD ingredients of immediate parallel adjacency to the once and future Main Street of Ogden Road, a plaza connecting the Main Street with the station, an active modes connection through the embankment connecting the neighbourhood to the employment opportunities of the Ogden Shops Lands, the one-block-to-the-east George Moss Park, and the heritage asset of the Ogden Block make this station an unparalleled city-building opportunity.

A final note on the 72 AV SE Station, just as with the Crossroads Station, the current contentiousness between the GreenLine and local TOD-supportive landowners is driven by a failure to develop a collaborative design vision. It is my sincere hope that the discussion this letter seeks to provoke represents a pathway to resolving this dispute to mutual benefit and without legal recourse.

The two challenges that dampen this opportunity are:

- The current lack of commitment to protecting the Ogden Block; and,
- The blank walls of the utility building that is currently slated to frame the southern edge of the plaza.

The solution to these challenges are:

- Mothball the Ogden Block through the construction period and vend its protection/designation and adaptive reuse into a TOD land sale to coincide with the completion of the station; and,
- Plan and allow for the lining of the utility building on the east, north, and west sides with micro-retail and/or residential units, to be delivered post-construction by a successful TOD proponent.

Ogden Station



- Multi Use Pathway (MUP)
 - Green Line Transit
 - Ogden Station
1. Plaza Connects Station to MainStreet with Active Edges on North and South Sides (**Resolution Required**)
 2. City TOD Land to include retention and adaptive reuse of Historic Ogden Block and to address station, plaza, and MainStreet with active edges (**Resolution Required**)
 3. GreenLine Utility Building to be lined with micro-retail facing station, plaza, and MainStreet (**Resolution Required**)
 4. Multi-Use Path Connection to Ogden Shops (GreenLine Responsibility)
 5. Ogden Road SE to be rebuilt as a MainStreet (City Responsibility)
 6. 72 AV SE to be rebuilt as a Multimodal Street (City Responsibility)
 7. 24 AV SE to be rebuilt as a cycle corridor street (City Responsibility)
 8. Ogden Road SE to be rebuilt as a Multimodal Street (**Resolution Required**)
 9. Ogden Dale Multi-Use Path (GreenLine Early Work)

78 Avenue SE

Early Work

The 78 AV SE Early Work, which is currently underway and will replace the unsafe 69 AV SE level crossing with a multimodal, grade-separated connection between Ogden and the Ogden Shops, is the canary in the coal mine with regard to this letter's attempt to arrest the slippage of the GreenLine's city-shaping focus. Despite years of advocacy, I was shocked to learn of the conventional design that was specified for this critical piece of city-building connective tissue.

It should be very clear that 78 AV SE must simultaneously accommodate not one, but two types of connectivity:

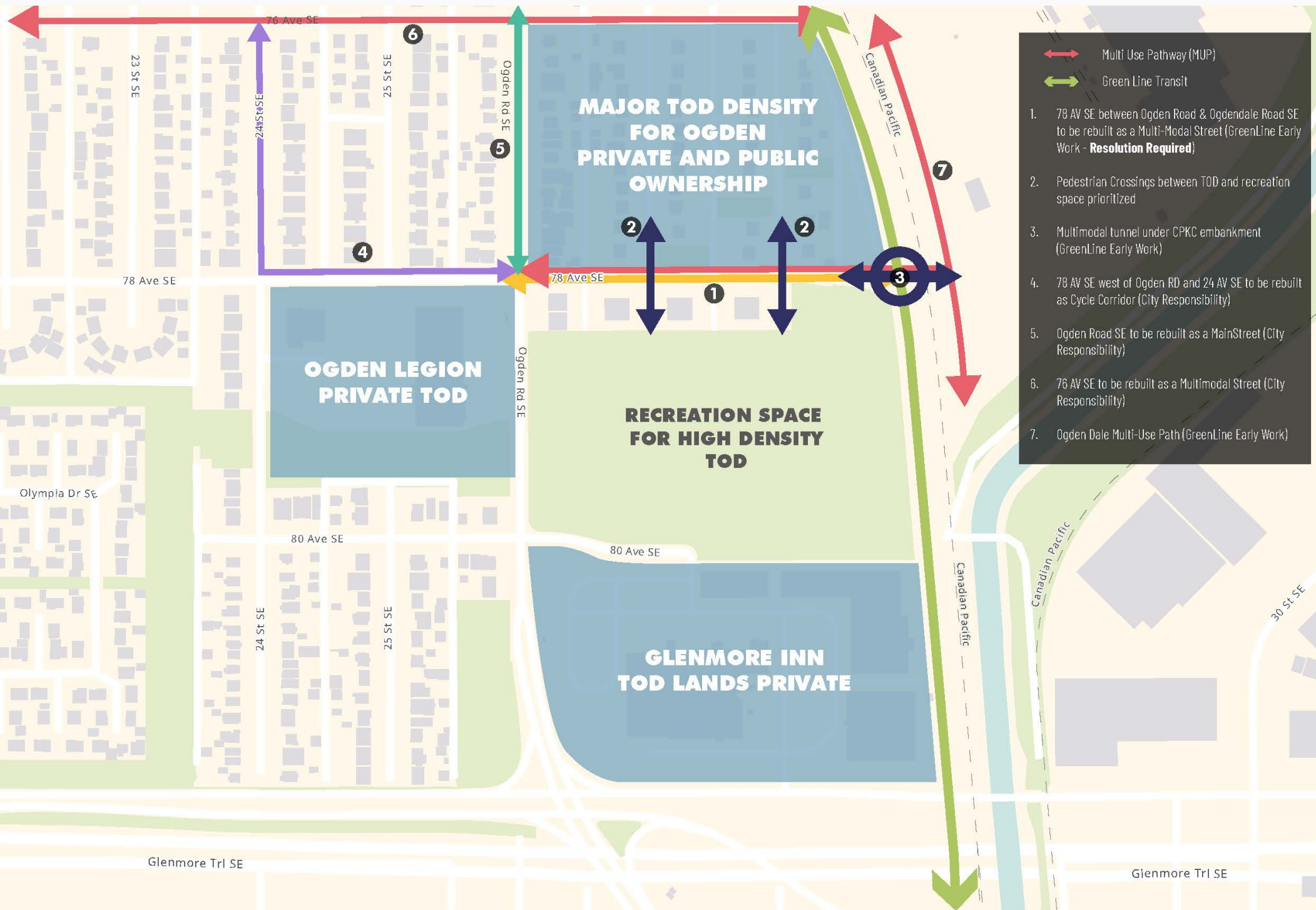
- The role that its current design is adequately accommodating is as a goods movement route between the Oden Shops Lands and Glenmore Trail;
- The role that its current design fails to accommodate is as a neighbourhood street addressing three types of connectivity:

·North-South connectivity between Ogden's highest potential density TOD area on the north side of 78 and that area's green space on the south side of 78;

·East-West connectivity for active modes (while I appreciate an MUP has been designed into the actual tunnel through the embankment, a narrow, roll-curbed mono-sidewalk through the neighbourhood fails to meet the test); and,

As a gateway condition at the intersection with Ogden Road demarcating the conventional arterial role Ogden Road will play connecting with Glenmore Trail to the south, and the pedestrian-oriented Main Street role it will play for the community to the north.

78 Avenue SE - Early Work



A Note on Truth & Reconciliation: Saint Dunstan's

In between the Bow River and the Deerfoot Trail, on the south side of the GreenLine's right of way, is a patch of land that between 1892 and 1907 was the grounds of Saint Dunstan's Indian Industrial School. In accordance with the City of Calgary's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and in response to our White Goose Flying policy, we are working with the community to memorialize this terrible chapter in our history in a meaningful and appropriate way. It is my sincere hope that under your and the Board's leadership, the GreenLine will recognize and embrace its role as a green line in our City and participate in supporting and connecting with this important heritage landscape.

A Note on a Land Development Corporation

I want to thank Mr. Beasley for his leadership as Chair of the GreenLine Planning Committee and specifically for calling attention to:

The gap between the City of Calgary's City Shaping mandate for the GreenLine and what Bow Transit Connectors (BTC) will deliver within GreenLine's mandate; and,

The time-sensitive nature of this problem.

This letter is a response to that problem, but it is presented with full awareness that while the first timescale involves discussing thoughtful adjustments to BTC's finalized delivery contract, the larger timescale involves ensuring a coordinated and timely transit-oriented development program in every station area and all along the line.

While there has yet to emerge a clear answer to who will do that work, and while I believe the scale and time-sensitive nature of the challenge requires a dedicated land development corporation, it is my hope that you will exercise the necessary leadership to ensure that the GreenLine, Bow Transit Connectors, The City, and a potential third party will be able to coordinate the delivery of both transit and transit-oriented development in a highly collaborative way.




Once again, thank you for the invitation to provide insight into the vision of the GreenLine project. I appreciate your willingness to hear this feedback and hope you recognize my passion for this critical project. I have 100% confidence that you share my commitment to ensuring the maximally beneficial delivery of the GreenLine. I am able to offer support or clarifications, or participate in edifying debate regarding any of these suggestions with you, your board, or your staff.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Gian-Carlo Carrà (he/him)
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