

# CASE STUDY: **THE DISTRICT AT BELTLINE**

Winner of the City of Calgary's 2022  
Mayor's Urban Design Award for Urban  
Architecture and winner of NAIO  
Calgary REX Award for Re-development  
of the Year, 2022





## DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The District at Beltline (The District) is a revitalization of the former IBM Corporate Park. Located in the most central point of the Beltline, The District offers close proximity to Central Memorial Park, bike lanes at 12th Ave and 2nd Street, nearby LRT stations (Blue and Red lines), many retail options and the Beltline's 25,000 residents. Originally built in the throes of a vibrant Calgary economy courtesy of a booming energy sector, it was a non-descript, sterile, three-building complex that stood in stark contrast to the surrounding animated Beltline neighbourhood. The campus design was mostly internalized and lacked any real engagement with the surroundings, and even less with its local community. Its primary duty was to provide large, uninterrupted floor space for IBM employees, within proximity of the downtown core, while also providing easy access to underground parking.

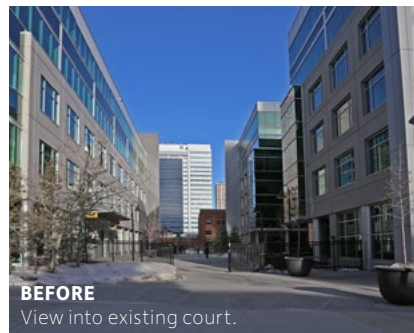


# OLD BLOCK, NEW LIFE, NEW INNOVATIVE DESIGN

The District's location, naturally fostered a site that could be lively 18 hours per day through a meaningful intersection of office employees, nearby residents, and the general population.

To capitalize on the potential of the location, the new owners set out to revitalize the former corporate campus to create a new identity for the site. One that considered the urban vibrancy of the local community and would thrive within the context of revised demands for office space during a downturn in the economy. The design intent was to create a new, experientially-focused destination that could attract a diversified, high-end tenant base, and increase foot traffic beyond 9-5. Thus, creating a meeting place like no other in Calgary.

The result is a redevelopment that naturally aligns with the types of properties existing in the tech corridors of Silicon Valley, Austin and Seattle. With three buildings totaling 360,000 sqft., rather than one building for the same or more density, there are more opportunities for identification and autonomy for tenants.



The design at ground-level focuses on a street-to-street, activated extension of the Beltline community. One that incorporates new food experiences, a network of laneways and connected indoor and outdoor gathering places, transforming the buildings' relationship with the site's exterior spaces. Laneways crisscross the property, enhancing mid-block connections that embrace the biking culture through connection to adjacent bike routes.

Boutique offices and elevator lobbies are connected to a food hall that features local chefs. Tenants, visitors, and the local community can spill out into the adjacent laneways, courtyard, and patios that are designed for year-round use, and can also accommodate Calgary's winter climate.

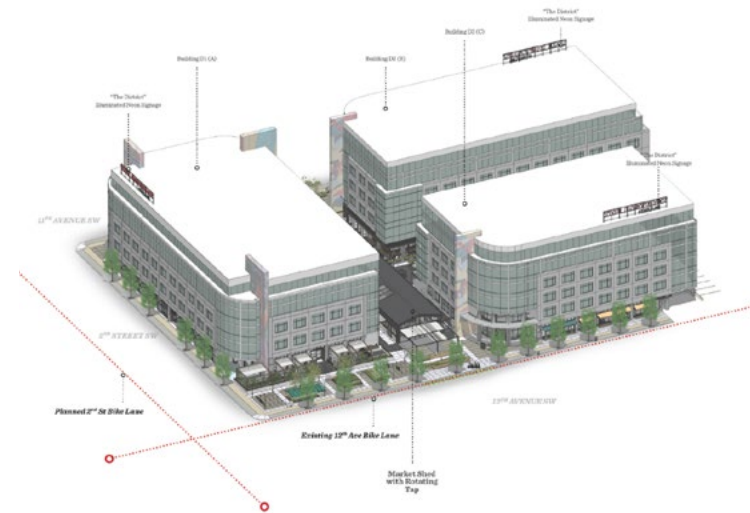
This new design promotes a diverse tenant mix and has attracted a range of technology, media and creative

tenancies who prefer the autonomy this type of building offers, as well as an engaging ground plane experience.

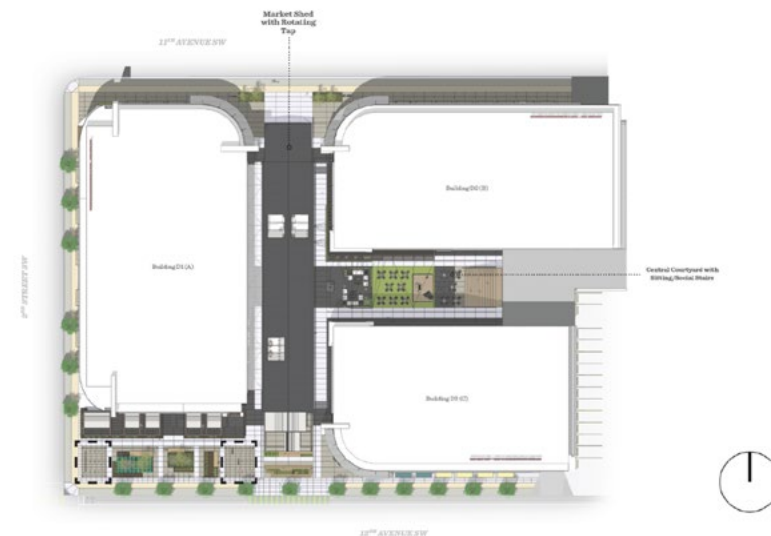
The District is designed as a collective of local operators allowing their unique brand presence to flourish. The modern construction creates an enhanced tenant experience with higher ceilings, modern materials, large glazed openings, modern building systems, unobstructed interior office space with fewer columns, and more natural light owing to shallow core depths and significant window coverage. The combination of the property's good bones and leasable characteristics with the innovative approach to redevelopment lead to a more enhanced in-building experience compared to its competitors.

The District was intentionally designed to lower the barriers for visitors, engage the street, and contribute to the vibrant culture of the Beltline community.

## Aerial Site View



## Site Plan

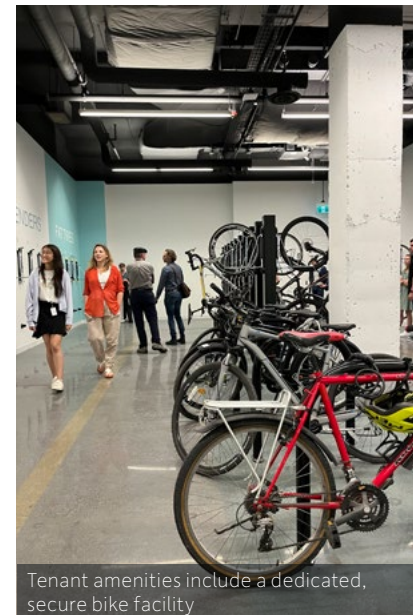


The site is interconnected with the public realm, creating a series of linkages, courtyard and open spaces.



## COMMUNITY BECOMES THE AMENITY

The District's amenities are unlike any other office building in the city and the number one reason why tenants chose to lease space at The District over the competition. There are tenant-only amenities such as a best-in-class fitness facility, a bicycle storage/maintenance facility, a tenant lounge, and an outdoor courtyard. But there are also amenities to be shared by tenants with the public, such as Calgary's only celebrity-chef driven food hall, sit down restaurants, a gastropub, a microbrewery, and a coffee shop. These amenities make the District (and its tenants) a meaningful part of the community and enhance the interaction between the two groups.



Tenant amenities include a dedicated, secure bike facility

## BEYOND 9-5 DESTINATION

The redevelopment of The District focused on the human experience at ground-level, including tapping into the city's emerging bike and brewing culture to understand how the space could evolve into a multi-hub destination.

The new campus was designed as an extension of the urban grid system with laneways and arcades merging through the buildings to enclose courtyards and indoor public spaces such as the 6,000 square foot central Market Shed, a new gastropub and microbrewery. The spaces between the buildings have become a lively, and growing network of meeting and mingling spots, each with its own characteristics and personality.

**LANEWAYS****LOBBY DESIGN**

The interior design draws from the neighbourhood's industrial history.





The project took cues from the diversity and vibrancy of the Beltline neighbourhood by bringing in local operators for retail, food services, and programming live events year-round.

While some buildings install elements of public art, The District itself has become public art. With its soaring vertical blades, the developer chose the

bold path of engaging an artist to re-imagine the look and feel through a series of 60-foot-high, Calgary-centric, street art installations on each of the three buildings. This public art feature of each building sets the stage for an unforgettable first impression and fully embodies the lively and inviting 'vibe' that has become so well-known at The District.

Overall, the new design provides the opportunity for creative clustering. Intimate laneways, lively food halls, sophisticated lounges, and the convergence of workplace culture all play their part in creating an atmosphere for chance encounters, informal meetings, and continual discovery.

## Ground Floor Plan

Amenities for tenants and public visitors are abundant throughout the property.



## REVITALIZATION DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

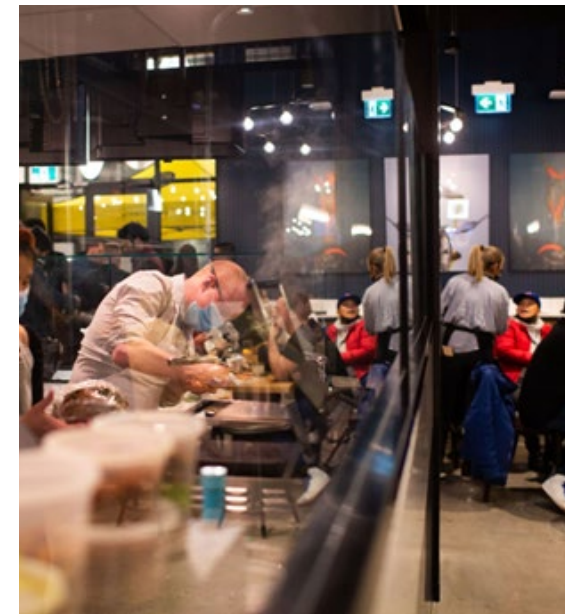
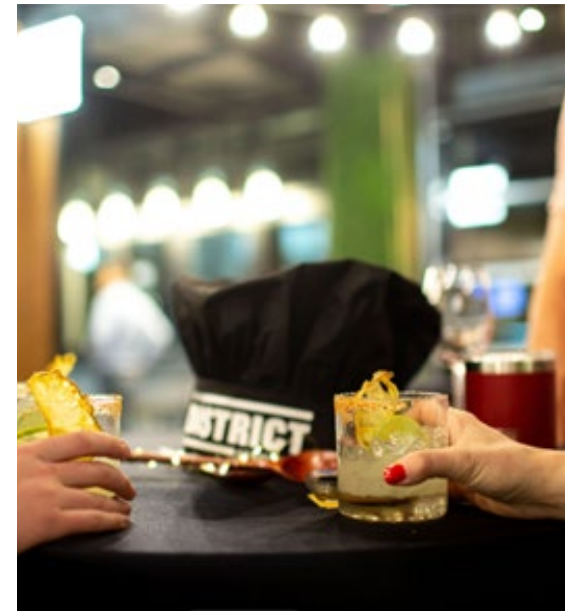
At the time the project renewal commenced (early concepts produced in late 2018), the office leasing context in Calgary was extremely challenging — owing to an economic downturn and record vacancy levels in the city. The existing anchor tenant had dwindled significantly and the small amount of retail space that had been active was no longer functional. With no ground floor retail tenants, the spaces between the buildings were desolate and were quickly becoming a security concern.

Developing the project during the pandemic presented some unique obstacles. In addition to the inherent challenges with launching a large construction project during a time of physical distancing and supply chain shortages, the project owners were in the United States and unable to travel to Canada during the bulk of the construction period. Adding to a depressed local economy there was also a changing sentiment about the need for office space based on the rise of remote work.

However, The District succeeded in attracting people back to the office at a

time when a growing number of employees were opting to work from home. New office and retail tenants, along with members of the community showed strong interest in the project from the get-go. This interest ultimately culminated not only with The District being fully leased, but demand also drove a significant increase in lease rates relative to local market conditions.

Like any other building revitalization, there were also challenges with adapting existing systems to support new uses. Significant investment had to be channeled towards upgrading the buildings' mechanical capabilities, particularly within the Food Hall. With every area of the project affected, inside and out, the construction scheduling had to be tightly coordinated with the ongoing operations and tenants. Seeing the transformation that was occurring, new tenants were signing up and looking to move into space almost immediately. A delicate balancing act with multiple contractors on site and overlapping of permits and approvals, was required to keep things on track.





# UNLOCKING URBAN POTENTIAL

City staff and counsellors, along with the broader community, were engaged early on and quickly became staunch advocates of the project. This created a seamless approvals process, sped up the overall schedule, and mitigated the risks associated with late changes resulting from city pushback.

The redevelopment proved what was possible with the right approach during a time when leasing interest across the city was suffering because of a depressed market.

Before the renovations, less than 50% of the building was occupied and there were no active retail spaces on site. What was once a challenging leasing environment attracted internationally significant tenants while also welcoming local small business owners. Since launching, we have signed new leases or entered into long-term extensions with 11 office tenants totaling 198,480 sqft. Since completing the renovations, net rental rates have increased by approximately 50% and the building is now close to 90% occupied.

The mix of tenants is notable for Calgary and shows the appreciation that the most sought-after tenants have for The District.

Before the renovations  
**50% OCCUPIED**

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After the renovations  
**NEARLY 90%  
OCCUPIED**



## TENANCY MIX BY INDUSTRY



**36%**  
Technology



**34%**  
Financial  
Services



**30%**  
Architecture/  
Design

A review of the tenancy list speaks to the diversity of organizations that were drawn to the destination and its experiential appeal — from giant and well-established tech companies including Google and IBM, to more local tenants such as Alberta Central Credit Union and smaller scale organizations including Amanda Hamilton Interior Design.

In addition, we signed leases with four full-service restaurants totaling 14,250 sqft and six food hall tenants. The District features Calgary's first chef-driven food hall and is home to several of Calgary's highest-regarded chefs including Takori's Duncan Ly, Oishidesu's Arce Morales, and Shrub Bloom's Adam Ryan.

The approach our team took with The District became a new benchmark for the city's vision of this neighbourhood's future. The adaptive reuse of The District not only transformed the leasing and marketability of this property but also offered new possibilities for how Calgary's urban spaces can be used in the future.





## TENANT LIST



### Office

Tenant	SQFT	Tenant Industry
IBI	27,031	Architecture/ Design
S2 Architecture	17,236	Architecture/ Design
Kasian Architecture	12,867	Architecture/ Design
Amanda Hamilton	1,833	Architecture/ Design
Alberta Central	51,033	Financial Services
NE2 Management Inc.	11,819	Financial Services
Northbridge Financial	6,005	Financial Services
Bell Canada	34,653	Technology
IBM	25,064	Technology
Athennian	7,964	Technology
Google	3,978	Technology
<b>199,483</b>		



### Retail

Tenant	SQFT	Tenant Industry
Craft / Central	5,562	Restaurant
Kama (Workshop)	4,545	Restaurant
Deville	2,218	Restaurant
Fire and Flora	1,932	Restaurant
Modern Burger	439	Restaurant
Takori	439	Restaurant
Roy's Korean Kitchen	358	Restaurant
Shrub Bloom	325	Restaurant
Greenfish	325	Restaurant
Oishidesu	215	Restaurant
Ramen Shack		
<b>16,358</b>		

**Total SQFT: 215,841**

## Street Views - prior to development



View from 12th Ave & 2nd St.



View into existing court.

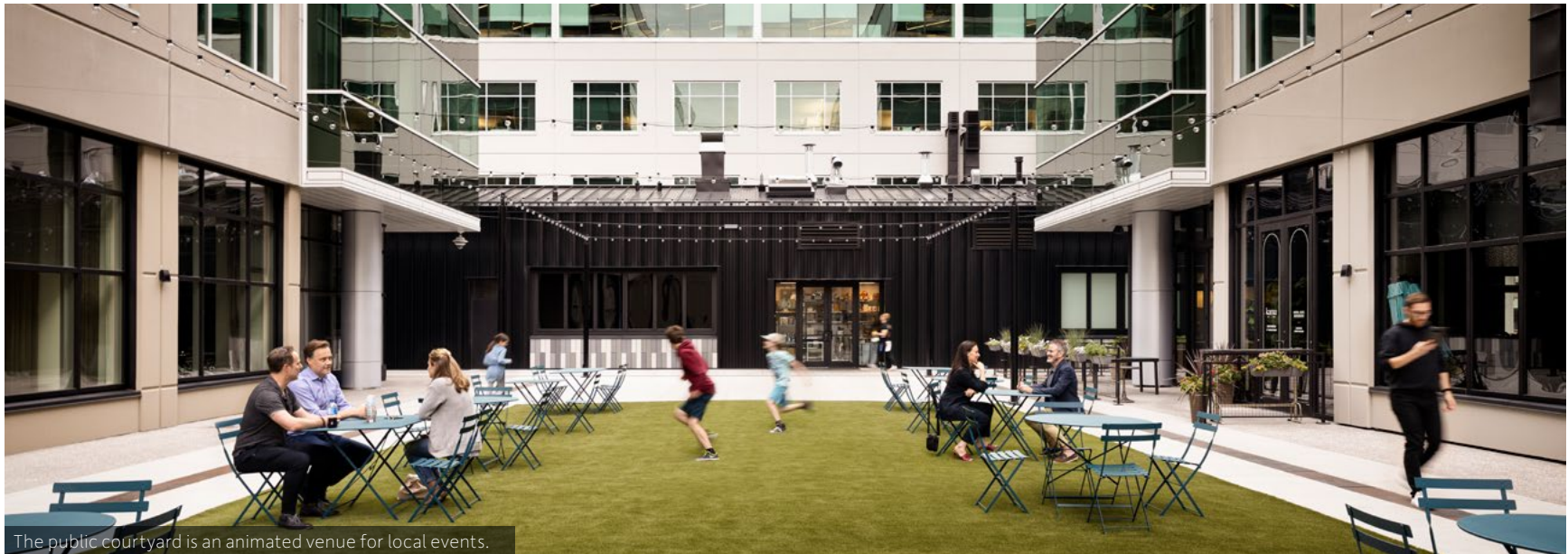


## Street Views - Post Development





## Laneways and Courtyard





## The Food Hall

A third place for casual meeting and mingling as well as events



## THE TEAM

### DESIGNERS: KASIAN



#### WILL CRAIG

PRINCIPAL  
ARCHITECT AAA, ARCHITECT AIBC, RIBA  
PART II

“By focusing on the human experience at ground-level, our Lifestyles design has truly enhanced the physical fabric of The District, creating a space where people want to work, shop, play and congregate.”

#### [Will's bio](#)

 403.462.3656 (Calgary)

 [will.craig@kasian.com](mailto:will.craig@kasian.com)



#### DOUG NIWA

PRINCIPAL  
BID

“A great design is strategic, and it's responsive to a client's needs. Great design is informed — there's a rationale for it. It's timeless, elegant, and solid.”

#### [Doug's bio](#)

 403.294.5659 (Calgary)

 [doug.niwa@kasian.com](mailto:doug.niwa@kasian.com)

#### Liam Woofter

*MArch, BEnvD, Architect AAA, LEED AP*  
Senior Project Architect, Associate

#### Sophie Belanger

*B.A.I.D.*  
Interior Designer

#### Bart Otwinowski

*Dipl. Arch.*  
Senior Technologist / Contract  
Administrator

#### Gilbert Valdez

*BScArch*  
Architectural Technologist

#### Fred Voo

*Dip. Architectural*  
Senior Job Captain





## PROJECT FACTS

### Architect and Interiors

Kasian Architecture, Interior Design and Planning

### Location

Calgary, Alberta

### Project Size

360,000 sqft

### Project Completion

2022

### Client, Owner/Developer

Spear Street Capital

### Landlord's Representative

CBRE

### Construction Manager

Cana

“

This will be a central gathering spot, a central sense of community, over and above being an amenity for the building. It just brings it more as a destination and a hub.”

**ADAM BALLEW**

VP Development.  
Spear Street Capital

## CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE THROUGH OUR LIFESCAPE STUDIO

The District was born out of our Lifescape studio. Lifescape, is an experientially-focused design approach that uses dynamic programming and activation of the public realm to create ground-level destinations. We apply Lifescape to entire buildings, workplaces and communities and create purposeful connections between people and place, enhancing the human experience.

[Download Lifescape Brochure](#)





# CREATING SEAMLESS EXPERIENCES

We have over 35 years of experience designing commercial, residential and mixed-use projects across Canada and internationally. Our portfolio consists of master plans, new builds as well as complex, phased renovations. We thrive on the complexity of challenging site configurations, multi-partner projects, phased sites and leverage our local market knowledge to simplify approval processes.

Most importantly, we live in the communities we create and explore place from a user's perspective.

## About Us



INCORPORATED  
IN **1985**



WE ARE A DIVERSE  
TEAM OF  
**250+ PEOPLE**



**FROM 30+**  
DIFFERENT  
COUNTRIES



SERVING CLIENTS ACROSS  
CANADA FROM  
**7 OFFICES**

Vancouver  
Victoria  
Langley  
Calgary

Edmonton  
Toronto  
Ottawa



**54**  
ARCHITECTS



**60**  
INTERIOR  
DESIGNERS



**55%**  
OF OUR TEAM IDENTIFY  
AS WOMEN



DELIVERING  
**3 CORE SERVICES**

Architecture  
Interior Design  
Master Planning & Urban Design

## ACROSS 12 SECTORS

Arts & Culture  
Commercial Mixed Use  
Education & Research  
Government Administration  
Healthcare

Industrial  
Military, Public Safety & Justice  
Residential  
Senior Living  
Transportation

Utilities  
Workplace

**For further information about our research, or for media inquiries,  
please contact our Marketing team.**



[marketing@kasian.com](mailto:marketing@kasian.com)

# ABOUT US

**Enhancing communities through the power of design.**

As architects, designers, and planners, we champion people and apply design solutions that improve lives and create a deeper connection between people and place. With an insatiable curiosity for the world, we leverage our in-between thinking to make the invisible visible.

We operate globally from our offices across Canada and partner with our clients who are visionaries, passionate, and courageous. Together we achieve results that make a difference to entire communities.

## OFFICES

Vancouver | Victoria | Langley | Calgary  
Edmonton | Toronto | Ottawa

[kasian.com/the-district](https://kasian.com/the-district)

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