

Stephen Avenue Block

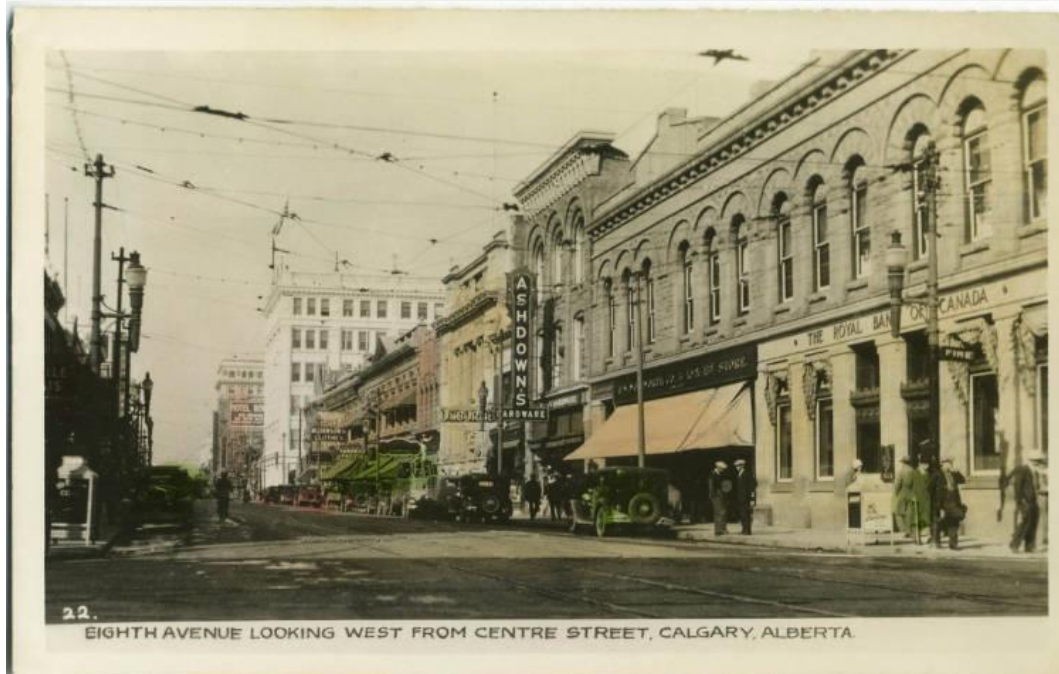


Alternate Name	8th Avenue
Address	126A - 102 8 Ave SW, Calgary, AB (Google Maps)
Community	Downtown Core
Year Constructed	1904 (Norman Block), 1901 (Clarence Block), 1892 (Tribune Block), 1911 (Molson's Bank), 1891 (Calgary Hardware), 1891 (Hudson's Bay Company Department Store)
Type	Commerce
Current Owner	Various
CHI Watch Risk¹	5 out of 5 (High Risk)
Designation²	Mix of Provincially, Municipally protected and not protected
City Inventory	Norman Block Clarence Block Tribune Block Molson's Bank Calgary Hardware Hudson's Bay Company Department Store
Significance³	As a National Historic Site , Stephen Avenue is a beautifully preserved, "superb illustration" of the bustling commercial streets that were characteristic of the Prairie building boom in the 1880s-1930s. This block was (and still is) seen as the heart of downtown, and features a diversity of architectural styles, each exemplars of their respective eras of architecture. There are 16 historical sites that would be affected by the development, seven of which have heritage designations.

	<p>The following buildings would be reduced to facades:</p> <p>Norman Block is representative of the Edwardian Commercial style, featuring a rooftop balustrade, scroll pediments, and festoon-decorated frieze. It is an early example of a multi-use building, with upper-floor offices and storefronts on the lower floor. It was also home to one of Calgary's earliest theatres, the Lyric Theatre.</p> <p>Clarence Block was designed in the Italianate architectural style. This building was constructed for and managed by Sir (Senator) James A. Lougheed, a major national political figure. Constructed with local sandstone, it features a rooftop balustrade, angular and curved pediments over windows, and a central angular pediment.</p> <p>Tribune Block, Calgary Hardware, and the Hudson's Bay Company Department Store (1891) are all excellent illustrations of the Romanesque Revival architectural style, featuring a distinct 'checkerwork' exterior finish for the sandstone rock-face and rounded-arch windows with voussoirs. The buildings were also constructed with local materials, such as Paskapoo sandstone from J. G. McCallum's Elbow River Quarry, and brick from the Calgary Brickyard. The ubiquity of sandstone in buildings along Stephen Ave contributed to Calgary's status as the 'Sandstone City'.</p> <p>Finally, the Molson's Bank is a beautiful illustration of the Beaux-Arts architectural style, featuring four Ionic columns and finely-carved details, such as the lions heads along the cornice, the attic consoles, and pediments over the doors and windows.</p>
Who ³ .	<p>Clarence Block was constructed for Sir (Senator) James A. Lougheed, and it was the home of his law practice until 1927. He shared this practice with his law partner R. B. Bennett, who was also an important Calgary citizen and eventually became the Prime Minister of Canada (from 1930-1935). Their practice was a prominent one in Western Canada, working with CPR, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Bank of Montreal.</p> <p>Norman Block was also associated with Lougheed - both Clarence Block and Norman Block were named after his two eldest sons.</p> <p>The site for the Tribune Block was originally purchased by Thomas Braden, a newsman who established the Calgary Herald (1883) and the Calgary Tribune (1885). Once constructed, the Tribune Block housed printing presses and administration for the paper. In 1902, William Davidson became the owner of the paper, renaming it to the Morning Albertan. After 1907, the Tribune Block was instead home to Charles' Traunswaiser's popular Hub Cigar and Billiard Hall (1907-1919). During this time, nationally acclaimed photographer Harry Pollard rented space in the building. The Tribune Block then later housed a series of local businesses, such as Bertram Charles Binning's family retail clothing store. Neighbouring buildings, such as the Calgary Hardware building that was home to a branch of James H. Ashdown's prominent hardware business, Ashdown's Hardware, also helped establish Stephen Ave as a prominent retail district within Calgary.</p> <p>The Hudson's Bay Company Department Store (1891) brought the concept of the department store to Calgary, and was the principal retail hub in the city until 1911. It initially housed the Hudson's Bay Company (as well as a Woolworth's store from 1914-1931). It was also home to the main Calgary branch of the Royal Bank of Canada, a demonstration of Stephen Avenue's role as a hub of banking and commercial activity in Calgary.</p>

	<p>The Molson's Bank has been home to several banks throughout its history: it first housed the Molson's Bank (1912-1925), before becoming the Alberta headquarters for the Bank of Toronto. It later became the Toronto-Dominion Bank's primary Calgary branch (1955-1967), but was sold in 1993. It was purchased again in 1997, and the interior was modified for an Irish pub. Despite this, the exterior and many of the interior rooms (the bank's safe, the manager's office, and mill work) are unaltered.</p>
Status	<p>As of May 2022, a multi-phase proposal (Development Permit DP2022-02927) has been submitted. One phase proposes to construct a 66-story high-rise, which would make it the tallest building in the city. The development would include office, residential, retail, and hotel space. Norman Block, Clarence Block, Tribune Block, Molson's Bank, Ashdown (Calgary) Hardware, and the Hudson's Block would all be reduced to facades, while historic buildings on 7th Ave (Army and Navy Store, Stuart Block, Calgary Plumbing and Heating, Self Serving Grocery, Hinds Meat Store, Rochons', Delamere Block, Calgary Stock Exchange, and components of the Central United Church) would be demolished. On Nov 17, 2022, The National Trust for Canada added the site to their endangered places list. https://nationaltrustcanada.ca/nt-endangered-places/stephen-avenue.</p>
CHI's Position Statement	<p>CHI is opposed to the development, and advocates instead for the retention and repurposing of these historic, inventoried buildings. The proposed development would fundamentally change the character of Stephen Avenue, one of Calgary's most vibrant parts of the downtown core (or, as the City of Calgary puts it, "Calgary's most iconic street"), and a national historic district. Calgary's downtown has a very high vacancy rate (currently about 29.7%, or 1.3 million square metres) so why compromise the street's historic character for further office space? The reported strategies that will be used to "save" the historic buildings are also simply not enough to preserve their historic status - only the facades will be preserved, and some will only be reconstructed "in kind" (such as the Hudson's Block). This would essentially nullify their status as historic sites. The City of Calgary and the Province need to do a better job of protecting our heritage assets and recognizing the economic, environmental and social benefits they provide to our citizens.</p>
Upcoming	<p>Watch for public hearing dates on the Land Use Application</p>
Public Call to Action	<p>Visit www.savestephenave.ca for more information and "Take Action" info. The City of Calgary is currently accepting comments for input on this proposed development (you can submit your comments here). Advocate for the awareness and preservation of Stephen Avenue by taking photos and posting on social media with the tag #savestephenave. Email, tweet, phone, or write your councillor (you can email your councillor via the form here, and make sure to CC terry.wong@calgary.ca, the Ward 7 councillor for downtown), and call 311.</p>
Related articles & posts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/opinion-stephen-avenue-quarter-towers-heritage-1.6456692?cmp=DM_Display_PopularNow_CBCCalgary_P8 2. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-developer-project-proposal-downtown-stephen-avenue-1.6448863 3. https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/0513-stephen-ave-heritage 4. https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/exciting-proposed-massive-downtown-development-greeted-enthusiastically 5. https://globalnews.ca/news/8823491/massive-downtown-calgary-development-stephen-avenue/ 6. https://dailyhive.com/calgary/stephen-avenue-quarter-development-calgary 7. https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/tower-development-proposed-for-stephen-avenue-city-asks-for-feedback-1.5898844 8. https://calgary.citynews.ca/2022/05/11/calgary-stephen-avenue/

Historic Photos







Photos drawn from the Calgary Public Library's [Williams and Harris Shared History Centre](#) and the [Glenbow Western Research Centre](#) at Taylor Family Digital Library on the University of Calgary campus

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1. CHI Heritage Watch Rating

5	Imminent loss	Active plans for demolition
4	High Risk	Risk factors + negative intentions / dormant demolition plans
3	At Risk	Risk factors
2	Possible Risk	Unknown intentions or mix of negative and positive factors
1	Monitoring	Positive intentions but still possible risk

2. A designated Municipal Historic Resource is legally protected against demolition or inappropriate changes.

3. Primary Source: City of Calgary Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources