



For Immediate Release

## Arts Commons Welcomes a New Era as Werklund Centre with Landmark Gift of \$75M from Dave Werklund and Family

**Bringing an unbridled commitment to education and community engagement, this gift marks the largest known philanthropic gift to the performing arts sector in Canadian history, raising secured funding for the transformation of the Arts Commons campus to over three quarters of its \$660M goal.**

**3 p.m. MST - June 26, 2024 – CALGARY** – Marking another major milestone for Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) and Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT), the largest arts-focused infrastructure project currently underway in Canada, Arts Commons—Western Canada’s largest performing arts centre located in the heart of downtown Calgary—is humbled to announce a **transformational gift of \$75 million** from Calgarians **Dave Werklund and family** to support ACT and OPT, bringing project funding to \$498.5 million of its \$660 million goal.

This gift demonstrates significant support from Calgary’s private sector to complement committed government funding, including the recently announced \$103 million from the Government of Alberta and \$315.5 million from The City of Calgary and Calgary Municipal Land Corporation’s Community Revitalization Levy. Driven by Dave Werklund’s personal values of accessible education, community care, and environmental sustainability, this blend of public and private support will ensure a truly transformational shift in the role of a modern arts centre in Canada—one that blends arts, education, social enterprise, and greater civic dialogue.

With immense gratitude for this historic donation, Arts Commons will invest the \$75 million gift towards construction costs, create the Dave Werklund Education Wing, as well as establish four funds to support the sustainability of the following institutional priorities: education, accessibility, operations, and an ongoing endowment to **rename Arts Commons as Werklund Centre in perpetuity, starting in the 2025-26 season.**

*“Principle-centered leadership is at the core of everything I do, in business and in my personal life. Integrity, building trust and being a force for positive change is at the core of who I am. Those are the values that my family aspires to and that inspired us to make this contribution. Family, yours and mine, are the heart of every community. It is my sincere hope that Werklund Centre will be run with these principles in mind and through its innovative programs be a force for positive change, bringing families across all sectors of our communities together,”* says Dave Werklund.

Born in 1945 and raised on a farm near Valleyview, Alberta, Dave Werklund's modest upbringing taught him the value of teamwork, innovation and caring for both his community and the land. That remained strong as his career in Alberta oil and gas grew: Recognizing an urgent need to resolve the industry's environmental and waste management issues, Dave's businesses have operated under the mantra "Protecting the air we breathe, the water we drink and the ground we walk on." As Founder and CEO of Canadian Crude Separators, he earned the Ernst & Young Canadian Entrepreneur Of The Year award in 2005. The following year, he established the Werklund Foundation to provide youth leadership opportunities, and his work as an environmental steward in the oil and gas services industry lives on in his new company, Pure Environmental. Dave Werklund is also a Calgary Business Hall of Fame inductee, a Member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, a Member of the Order of Canada, and recipient of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal. Through the Werklund Family Office, Dave owns and manages a vast portfolio of companies and investments which allow him to engage in his favourite passion, philanthropy.

Despite never surpassing Grade 9 in school, Dave's life has been filled with a passion for knowledge and education, devouring books to enhance his natural skills in leadership and business, feeding his entrepreneurial spirit as a student of the world, and engaging in continuous personal development training. His passion for higher learning compelled him to support others' pursuits of formal education: In 2013, his \$25 million gift to the University of Calgary's Faculty of Education created the Werklund School of Education, and in 2017, he made the largest-ever personal donation to an Alberta college or technical institution of \$16 million, creating the Werklund Agriculture Institute at Olds College. The announcement of today's gift marks a new era of such philanthropy for the Werklund family, but one that follows in this history of increasing creative learning opportunities in Alberta and recognizes the connection between equitable access to the arts, education, and our collective health and wellbeing.

*"I first met Dave through his support of our of education programs and was quickly blown away by his unflappable values, his incredible integrity, and his fierce commitment to building strong and resilient communities by supporting families and the development of young people," says Arts Commons President & CEO Alex Sarian. "Getting to know the Werklund family has been a highlight of my time at Arts Commons, and I'm so incredibly grateful they've chosen this project as their love letter to Calgary for generations to come. Today's announcement aligns strongly with Dave's and my belief that the world-class opportunities and experiences created at Werklund Centre be relevant, accessible, and impactful to all who are lucky enough to call Calgary and Alberta home. Together, we will proudly build a destination that reflects Dave's values of humility, honesty, kindness, and love."*

*"In 1985, we opened as Calgary Centre for Performing Arts as our city prepared to host the world for the 1988 Winter Olympics. Since then, we have hosted hundreds of thousands of Calgarians every year thanks to the incredible work of our resident companies: Alberta Theatre Projects, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, Theatre Calgary, One Yellow Rabbit, and our own programming arm, Arts Commons Presents. Calgary's incredible growth has inspired our own evolution, and we are proud of how our community partnerships, youth development programs, education initiatives, and new works incubators have become central pillars of our civic mandate," says David Smith, Chair of the Arts Commons Board of Directors. "Thanks to Dave Werklund, today's announcement shines a light on what the arts are truly capable of."*

The Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) and Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) projects are being led in partnership by Arts Commons, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation, and The City of Calgary. Together, the \$660 million transformation will result in a downtown arts campus that includes the expansion and modernization of Arts Commons facilities, the revitalization of Olympic Plaza, and the creation of \$50 million in endowments.

*"The transformation of Arts Commons and Olympic Plaza are integral to the revitalization of Calgary's downtown. This transformational gift is testament to the best of Calgary. Calgarians are leaders, they are visionaries, and they are committed to ensuring everyone who lives here and comes to visit have access to world class experiences. The generosity of Mr. Werklund and leadership of Arts Commons are an embodiment of the amazing strides being made in our city,"* says Mayor of Calgary, Jyoti Gondek.

*"Alberta's government is dedicated to supporting the arts and we're thrilled about the Werklund family's investment in Arts Commons. Budget 2024 invests \$103 million over seven years in ACT to revitalize Calgary's downtown core and make the arts more accessible. When the arts thrive, Alberta thrives,"* says Tanya Fir, Alberta Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

This announcement comes weeks after revealing the architectural designs for the ACT expansion, a three-level building containing a new 1,000-seat theatre, a 200-seat studio theatre, and publicly accessible gathering spaces that are "of and for Calgary," designed by a prime design team of Toronto's KPMB Architects, and Calgary-based Hindle Architects and Tawaw Architecture Collective, inspired by Alberta's landscapes and Indigenous dwelling typologies. The expansion is set to break ground in December 2024 and open in the 2028-29 season.

Design for the Olympic Plaza Transformation project, led by gh3\* Architecture, Urban Design & Landscape Architecture, CCxA Landscape Architecture & Urban Design, and Belleville Placemaking, is underway and expected to be revealed in early 2025. Once complete, Werklund Centre will lead curated programming, operations, and maintenance for the revitalized plaza.

Design is underway for the modernization phase of ACT and construction timelines for the modernization will be defined as additional funding is secured.

ACT is expected to support 3,454 jobs, contribute \$424 million in GDP to the economy, and generate \$82 million in federal, provincial and municipal taxes during the construction period.

*"Calgary's Arts Commons is an undisputed part of the city's identity, and the arts in Alberta are a vital part of our economic, social, and cultural fabric. We want to ensure the show continues to go on—bigger and better than ever. Thanks to public and private partnerships, I am excited that a new generation of Calgarians, Albertans, and visitors from around the world will experience the magic of Arts Commons, soon to be Werklund Centre, for many decades to come,"* says Alberta Premier Danielle Smith.

A request for proposals will be issued by Arts Commons in the coming weeks to develop the new brand identity for Werklund Centre.

To learn more about the Arts Commons Transformation and Olympic Plaza Transformation project, please visit [artscommons.ca/act](https://artscommons.ca/act).

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**Arts Commons** is the steward of Western Canada's largest arts centre, and the artistic and civic cornerstone of Calgary's downtown core. For nearly 40 years, it has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians. It is home to six resident companies, including Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, Theatre Calgary, and One Yellow Rabbit. It houses six gallery spaces, five theatres, and the Jack Singer Concert Hall. Its four sub-brands – Arts Commons Presents, Arts Commons Galleries, Arts Commons Education, and Arts Commons Connects – promote local, national, international, emerging and established artists with a focus on championing inclusion and reconciliation, ensuring the arts' rightful place at the centre of civic life.