



Council for Canadian Urbanism

Strategic Plan 2022-23



CanU



COUNCIL FOR / CONSEIL
CANADIAN URBANISM/
CANADIEN D'URBANISME

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Who we are

The Council for Canadian Urbanism is an incorporated not-for profit organization led by a Board of Directors

CanU is dedicated to improving City-Building practices, research, and education in order to create sustainable, healthy, and livable cities and communities across Canada.

Le Conseil canadien d'urbanisme (CanU) est un organisme à but non lucratif dirigé par un conseil d'administration.

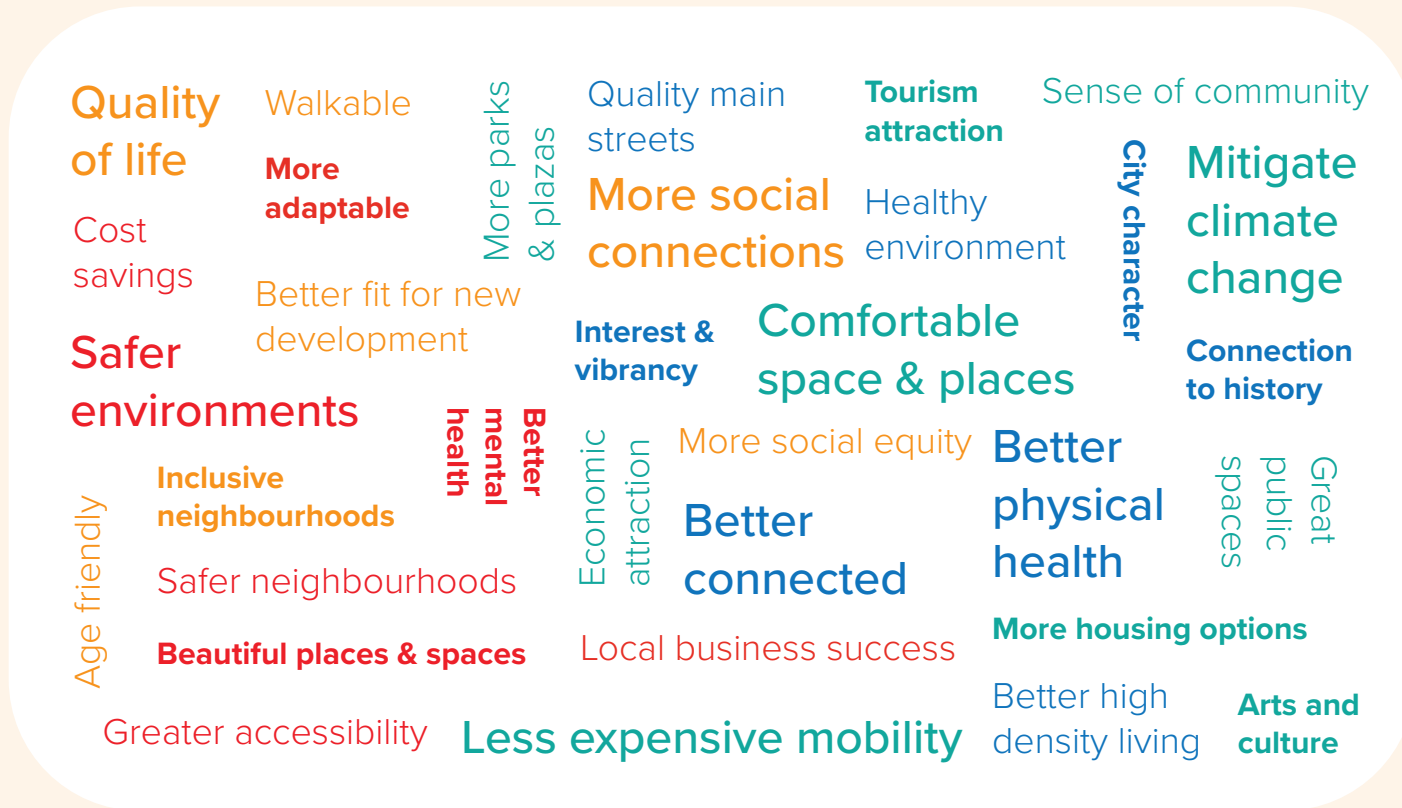
CanU promeut l'amélioration de la pratique, de la recherche et de l'enseignement en urbanisme et en aménagement urbain dans le but de créer des villes et collectivités canadiennes plus conviviales, saines et durables.

Our Mission

Better cities through urban design

De meilleures villes grâce au design urbain

What can we get from better cities?



How do we achieve better cities through urban design?



Clarifying the issues CanU is confronting

Challenges To Our Mission

PRESSING DESIGN ISSUES IN CANADA

(Varies by City/region across the Country)

- Auto-dominated design for streets, streetscapes, sites & buildings; truly attractive mobility choice is often absent
- New neighbourhoods designed as homogenous, placeless sprawl and not complete neighbourhoods
- There is a lack of focus on livability with too much focus on technical standards
- Existing suburbs not being re-designed to introduce density, mix, connections & sustainable forms
- Cities are being designed to create and reinforce inequities of many kinds
- Infill and intensification is not being designed well to integrate into existing neighbourhoods
- The public realm is not being well designed to support culture, gathering, quality of life
- Cities are being designed to exacerbate & not mitigate climate change
- Dominant urban forms are economically unsustainable over time and not easily adaptable

PRESSING GAPS TO BETTER DESIGN IN CANADA

- Lack of awareness & understanding by the public and decision-makers of urban design & its connection to economic, social and environmental issues
- Lack of understanding on how to achieve well designed cities
- Municipal budgets are inadequate to allow for an appropriately designed public realm
- Political decision making favours any growth, over managed quality growth in many Canadian cities
- There is a lack of urban design skills and knowledge in many planners, designers, engineers and politicians
- There is a lack of respect for urban design and it is often seen as a frill less important than the goals of other professions
- Legislation across Canada gives inadequate tools to design professionals
- The market will often support poorly designed developments, which leaves little incentive for developers to introduce quality design
- No group is strongly and effectively advocating for urban design across Canada and it often falls “between the cracks” of architecture, planning, engineering, & landscape architecture

PRESSING ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR CANU

- CanU staff resources are very limited and the Board of Directors are required to do much of CanU’s workload
- CanU isn’t providing plentiful opportunities for those outside the Board to become involved in meaningful ways
- CanU’s revenues are limited and have become even more constrained without the annual Summit
- Awareness of CanU is somewhat limited within the industry across Canada.
- There are several other organizations that address similar subject matter and CanU isn’t well distinguished from each of them
- Collectively, the CanU Caucuses have variable levels of activity & aren’t deliberately aligned with the Board’s work program.
- How can Canu have a more meaningful impact on improving urban design practices across Canada?
- Are CanU initiatives targeting the most important groups to meaningfully affect change in Canadian urbanism?
- The annual Summit is extremely time intensive and leaves minimal resources for other CanU initiatives

Keeping an eye on opportunities

Opportunities For Mission

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETTER DESIGN IN CANADA

- **Growing awareness** about the importance of urban design within the planning and engineering professions
- There are several **new urban design programs** in Canadian universities and urban design is becoming a staple of planning programs
- Canada's municipal government structure allows for **local decision-making** that can truly impact urban design quality
- There is a **public awakening about climate change** and escalating political pressure to do something about it – **urban design can be part of the solution**
- **Many great projects** appearing on the Canadian landscape – leadership & examples

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES



CanU has a solid foundation and a strong roster of well-known founding members who continue to be involved



New partnerships opportunities have emerged



CanU has 10+ years of longevity & recognition in various urban design circles



Significant sponsorship was obtained in 2021 and new opportunities may exist



The recent on-line Summit has taught CanU a new technology to connect with urbanists



Several of the Caucuses continue to operate and have good participation

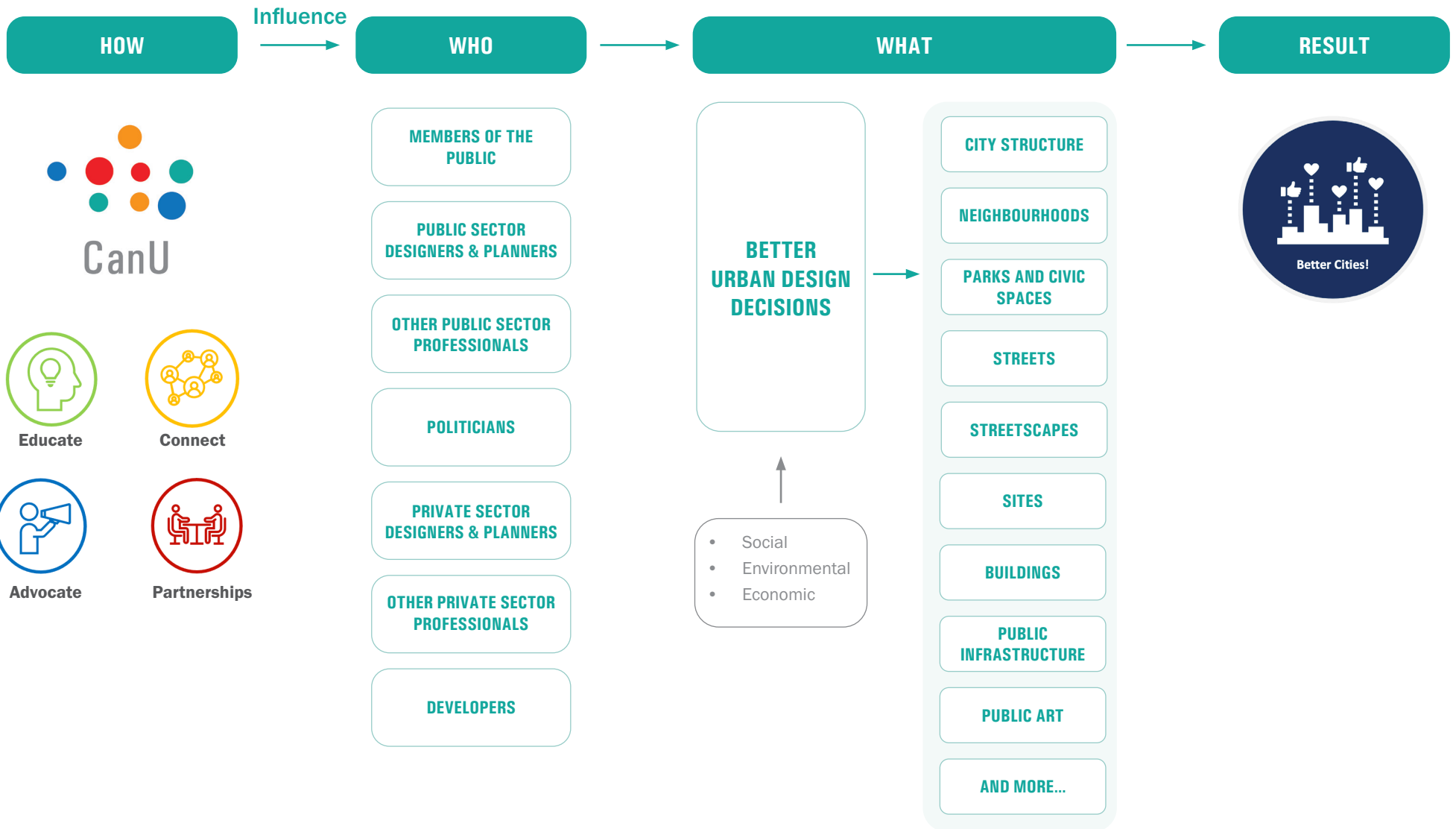


The recent on-line Summit developed new CanU content



The CanU Board of Directors are comfortable with change and seeking new ways to be more effective

Strategic Approach



Who

Re-thinking CanU's Target Audience

Politicians *

- Key target group not well engaged to date
- Make decisions on public spaces, buildings, parks, streets, etc.
- Make decision on private sector applications

Members of the Public *

- Key target group not well engaged to date
- Important influence political decision makers
- Can be key advocates
- To have impact likely need to work with established community groups
- Can impact developer decisions – market demand

Other Public Sector Professionals *

- Key target group not well engaged to date
- Includes Engineers, Treasurers, CAO's, CBO's
- Can be key advocates or “killers” of urban design initiatives
- Impact on political decision-makers

Developers *

- Key target group not well engaged to date
- Shape the public realm through private sector development
- Better understanding of the value vs. cost of urban design could make a difference
- Responsive to market demand – public awareness

Other Private Sector Professionals

- Can have impact on developer's plans and designs
 - Can scuttle urban design considerations in favour of technical standards
 - Can disrespect field of urban design, undercutting its perceived value with others
-

Almost exclusively CanU's target audience to date

Public Sector Designers & Planners

Private Sector Designers & Planners

How

How We Can Affect Change



Educate

- Constantly communicate the value of urban design to people everyday
- Target key groups that can make change
- Raise awareness where it is lacking – reveal what is possible
- Provide best practices and educational resources on urban design
- Provide tools for community, politicians, developers and design professionals
- Create an urban design basics course with informal certification
- Write blog posts on CanU website
- Create CanU podcast



Advocate

- Host events that bring urban design professionals together
- Re-consider resources devoted to annual Summit and consider new ways to deliver it (e.g. Zoom sessions)
- Explore new and innovative ways to connect urban design professionals
- Create a network of champions within the urban design profession that can support one another
- Connect urban design advocates in communities, non-design professions, and institutions
- Re-constitute caucuses to align with work program and give better opportunity for others to engage



Connect & Convene

- Develop a call to action for better cities through urban design
- Develop a media network across Canada to write stories on Urban Design
- Create an urban design “Placecheck Tool” for communities to use to evaluate neighbourhoods and new projects
- Develop a media network who can reach out for quotes and opinions on urban issues
- Create position papers on urban design issues



Partnerships & Support

- Develop partnerships with others who have a complimentary mission
- Combine resources with high profile organizations to create synergies and efficiencies
- Find new sponsorship opportunities
- Seek out government funding
- Support community and neighbourhood groups that want to advocate for better design
- Develop 2-3 template presentations on Urban Design for others to use to advocate for better design

How

CanU Communications Considerations



What is our call to action?
Our value proposition?



What is our style?

- Professional, serious, lecture style
- Quirky, entertaining, revealing



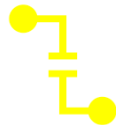
Who are we targeting?



How are we different than others in this crowded space?



Why are we targeting them?
How can they impact change?



Where are people already going that we can intercept them?



Communicate on their terms

- What value can we bring to them?
- Messages that they care about
- Places they will actually receive our messages
- Format that grabs their attention in a busy world

How

Growing CanU's Capacity

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC CAUCUSES



Climate Change

- Discuss challenges and opportunities for climate change mitigation & adaptation



Urbanizing the Suburbs

- Discuss challenges and opportunities for bringing density, mix, and urban form to existing suburban landscapes



Research

- Develop and provide urban design research resources

Celebrate the Caucuses!

- Great commitment to improving urban design in Canada
- Connecting & engaging people from across the Country
- Delivered recent events and great content

Issues Identified by Caucuses:

- Disconnected from the Board
- No clear direction or annual work program for caucuses
- No reporting mechanism in place to track progress or accomplishments
- Resources are very limited

PROPOSED WORKING GROUPS



Organizational Working Group

- Strategic planning
- Setting annual work program
- Monitoring and reporting progress
- Establishing working groups, descriptions, leads, etc
- Board administration and connection with staff
- Budgeting and record keeping
- Fundraising
- Partnership development



Programming Working Group

- Create program of events for year
- Organize and deliver events
- Convene targeted groups (including non-design professionals) to create opportunities



Content Development Working Group

- Develop CanU content – videos, blogs, design resources, presentations, case studies

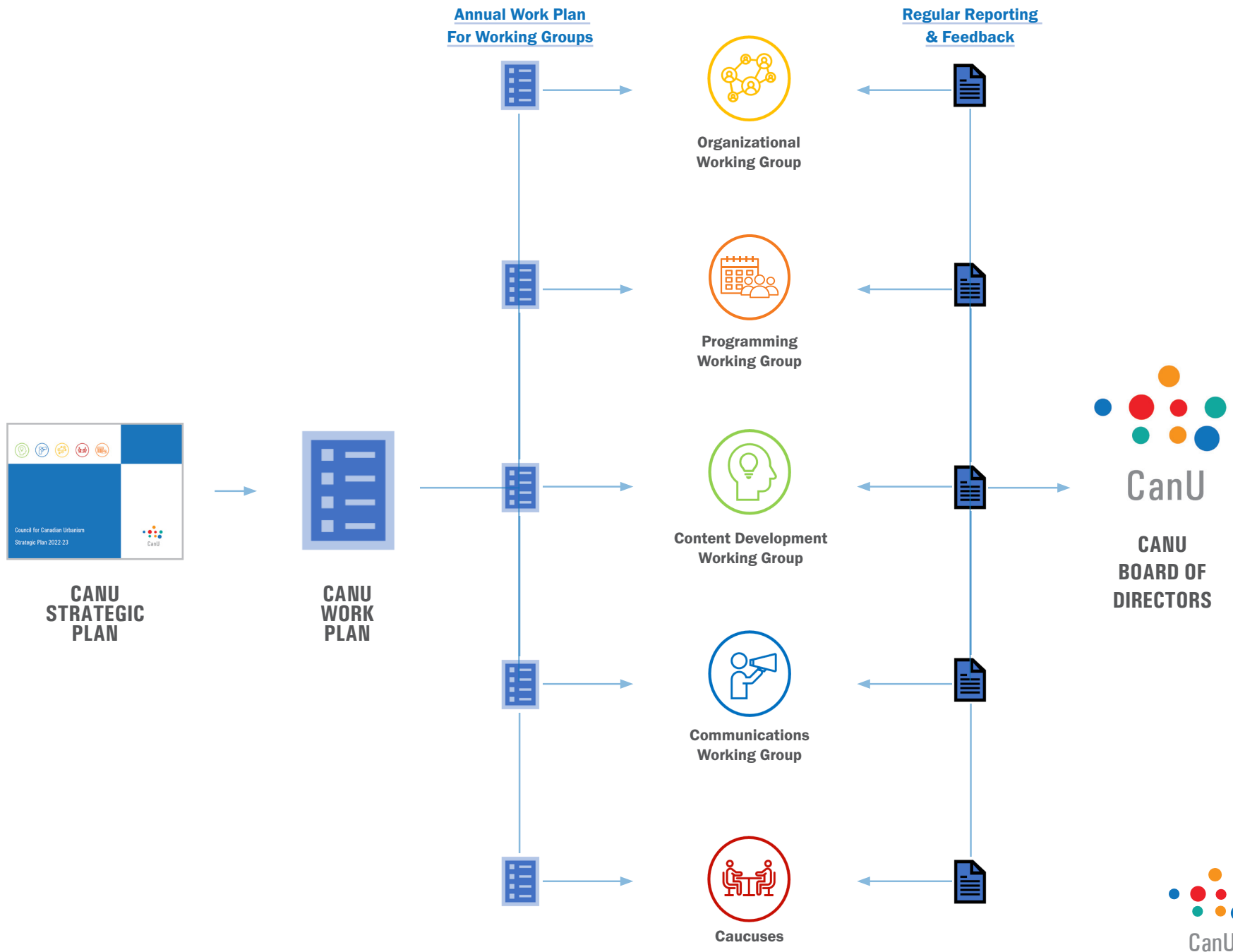


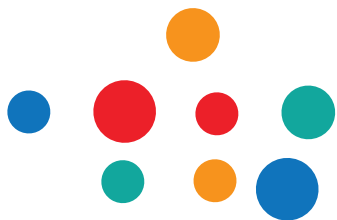
Communications Working Group

- Website development and maintenance
- Outreach to membership & design professionals
- Outreach to targeted non-design groups such as community leaders, politicians, developers, etc.
- Prepare advocacy materials to promote CanU mission - papers, blogs, quotes
- Assemble Urban Design Media Network
- Develop tools for various groups to use to advocate for better cities through urban design

How

Delivering on our Work Plan





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