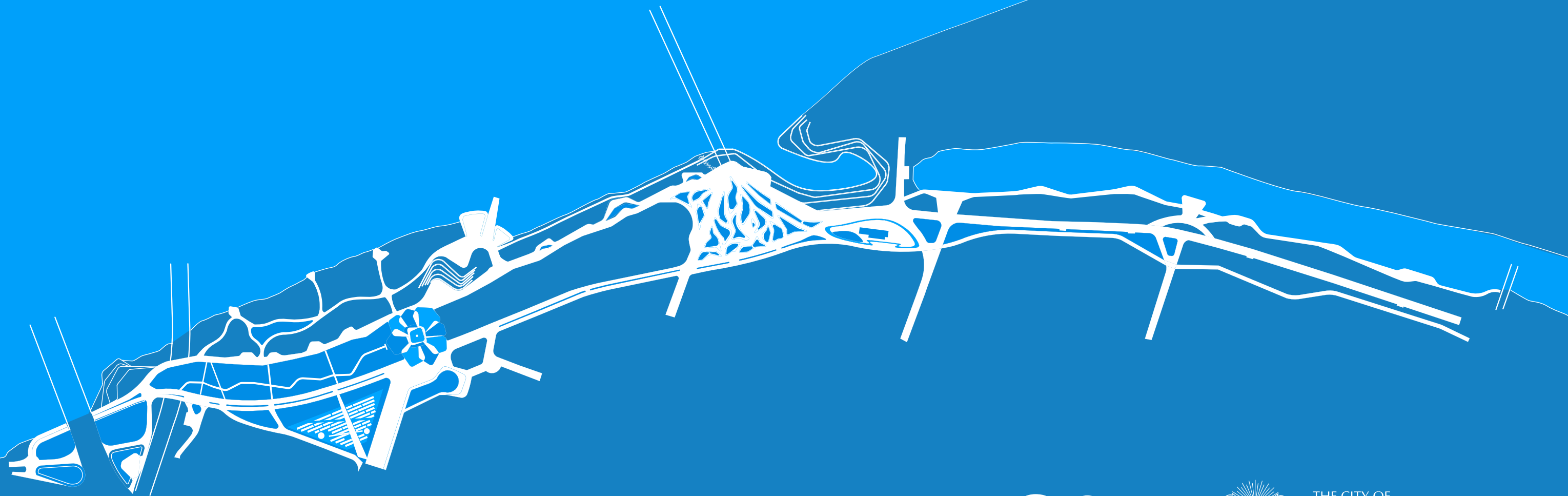


WEST EAU CLAIRE PARK

PUBLIC REALM PLAN

February | 2015



O2

O2 Planning + Design Inc.



THE CITY OF
CALGARY

The City of Calgary



Executive Summary

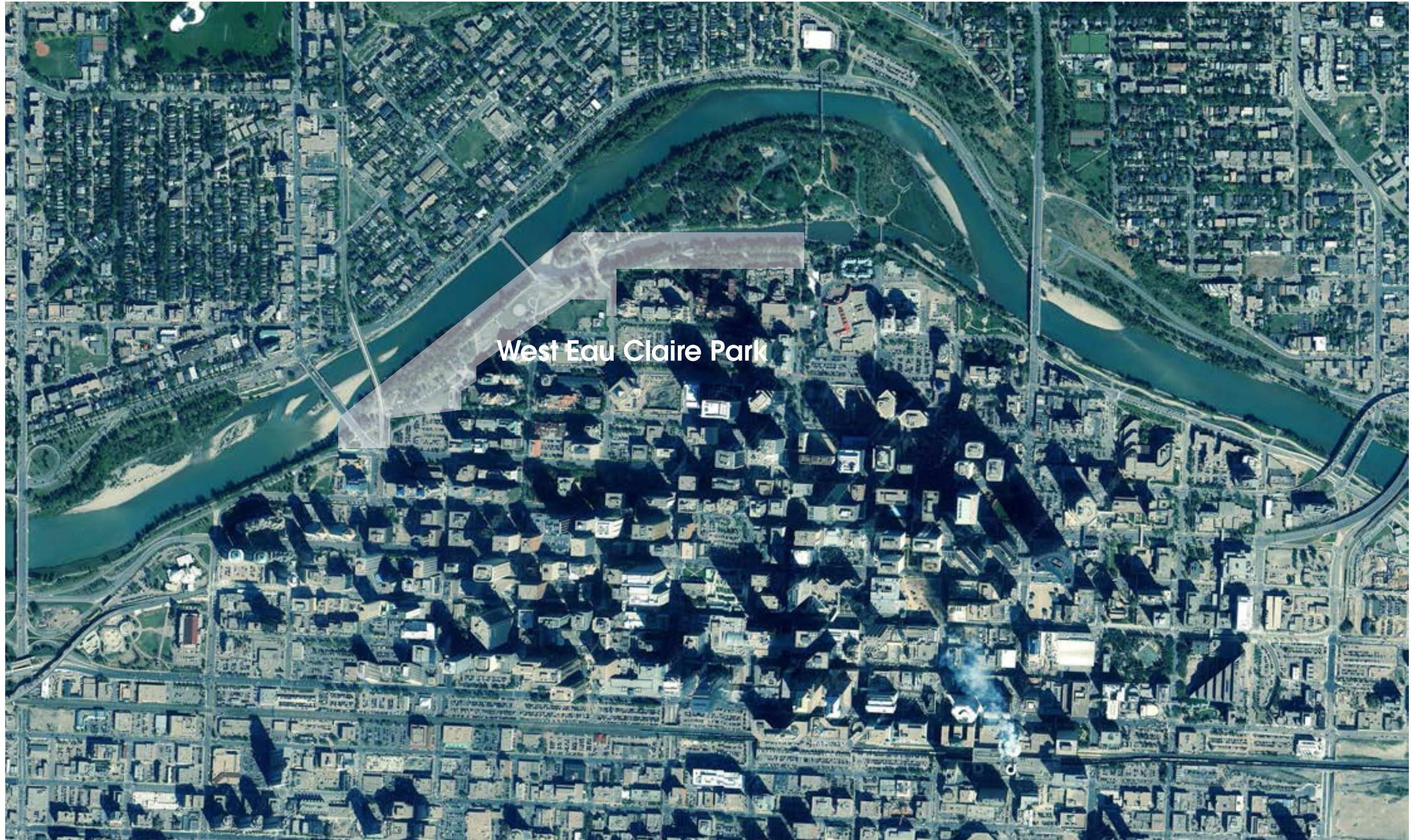
O2 Planning + Design Inc. (O2) were assigned by the City of Calgary to develop a strong vision for West Eau Claire Park that advances the goal of Centre City Plan: to create a more liveable, caring, and thriving place. This Master Plan is the result of a strong engagement process which saw a record amount of feedback and comments.

Public feedback was solicited through numerous avenues including: open houses, interactive online maps, surveys, stakeholder workshops and pop up information tables. From this feedback, four categories were developed which applied to the design of the park: circulation and connectivity; amenities; vegetation; and, safety and maintenance.

The public comments informed a collective vision for a park that connects the city to the river and provides a network of pathways that connects a series of convivial places along the river. The park design is centred around a new garden that celebrates the Peace Bridge. The West Eau Claire Park plan unifies and connects spaces that are planned to be safe and well maintained to accommodate different users throughout the year. It is designed to be economical to operate while remaining flexible, active and seasonal. Based on the site's unique landscape features and public ideas for recreational activities ten distinct places were designed and connected by a comprehensive circulation strategy. The places were named:

- » East Promenade + Lagoon Boardwalk
- » The Cove
- » Delta Garden
- » The Great Lawn
- » 8th Street Plaza
- » The Launch
- » Peace Sculpture Garden
- » River Lookouts
- » Community Garden + Exercise Machines
- » River Decks

The design maximizes the value of existing conditions and context while creating innovative new places that represent contemporary activities. Improved circulation is achieved through a separated bike lane that leaves a continuous promenade along the river for pedestrian use. A diverse range of amenities have been added to the park and connections to the downtown and east and west ends of the park have been strengthened. The existing vegetation has been preserved and enhanced or modified to increase visibility and security. A range of open spaces are included that can accommodate passive activities and contemplative spaces, to informal active uses such as a community gathering or impromptu field sports.



West Eau Claire Park

Purpose + Process

The West Eau Claire Park and Public Realm Plan addresses the area along the Eau Claire Promenade from the Louise Bridge (10th Street SW) to Eau Claire Plaza. The plan identifies a clear vision and principles to guide the development of the public realm, and prioritize improvements.

The project goal is to create a comprehensive plan that enhances the public realm by creating a place that is pedestrian & cyclist oriented, safe, secure, accessible, legible, interesting and enjoyable for all user groups.

The Public Realm Plan was developed in response to Calgary's Centre City Plan. Approved by council in May 2007, the Centre City Plan presents a new vision for the Centre City as a livable, caring and thriving place. The long-term plan places a priority on pedestrian-oriented public realm enhancements. The West Eau Claire Park & Public Realm includes the interface between the City of Calgary Parks property and the Bow River, the Peace Bridge, the adjacent community of Eau Claire and the terminus of 6th, 7th, and 8th Streets. There is significant development occurring in the neighbourhood including the recently completed Peace Bridge, the proposed Concord Pacific development, the 8th Street Corridor Design and the Eau Claire Plaza re-development. The Public Realm Plan provides a strong vision for future enhancements and development that unifies the riverfront, reinforces a sense of place and enhances the user experience.

Unique and innovative approaches were taken to establish distinct spaces throughout the site that were unified by an organized flow of both cyclist and pedestrian traffic. The approach was based on separating cyclist and pedestrian flows while minimizing conflict zones where they come together at specific nodes of interaction. Circulation strategies include a boardwalk that connects people to the east lagoon; a delta-inspired central node to gather and redistribute flows at the Peace Bridge intersection; better access to the waterfront at key places; safer access to natural paths along the central waterfront; a community garden and peace garden; and, a new plaza and boat launch to activate the terminus of 8th Street and provide better access to the western waterfront.

The final design is based on a strong re-imagining of how both cyclists and pedestrians move throughout the park. The places within the park are represented as a series unique spaces that allow people to mix, relax and interact. The aspiration is to elevate the image of West Eau Claire, one of Calgary's most important open spaces and set a precedent for years to come.

Vision

West Eau Claire Park defines the image of Calgary's riverscape — a place where the city meets the river. The Park is designed to connect the iconic Peace Bridge to the city and draw people along the shoreline through a diverse set of activities and places.

The vision for West Eau Claire Park is to create the most visited and valued open space in Calgary: the natural heart of the city where culture and nature intermingle.





East Promenade + Lagoon Boardwalk

The Cove

Circulation Network

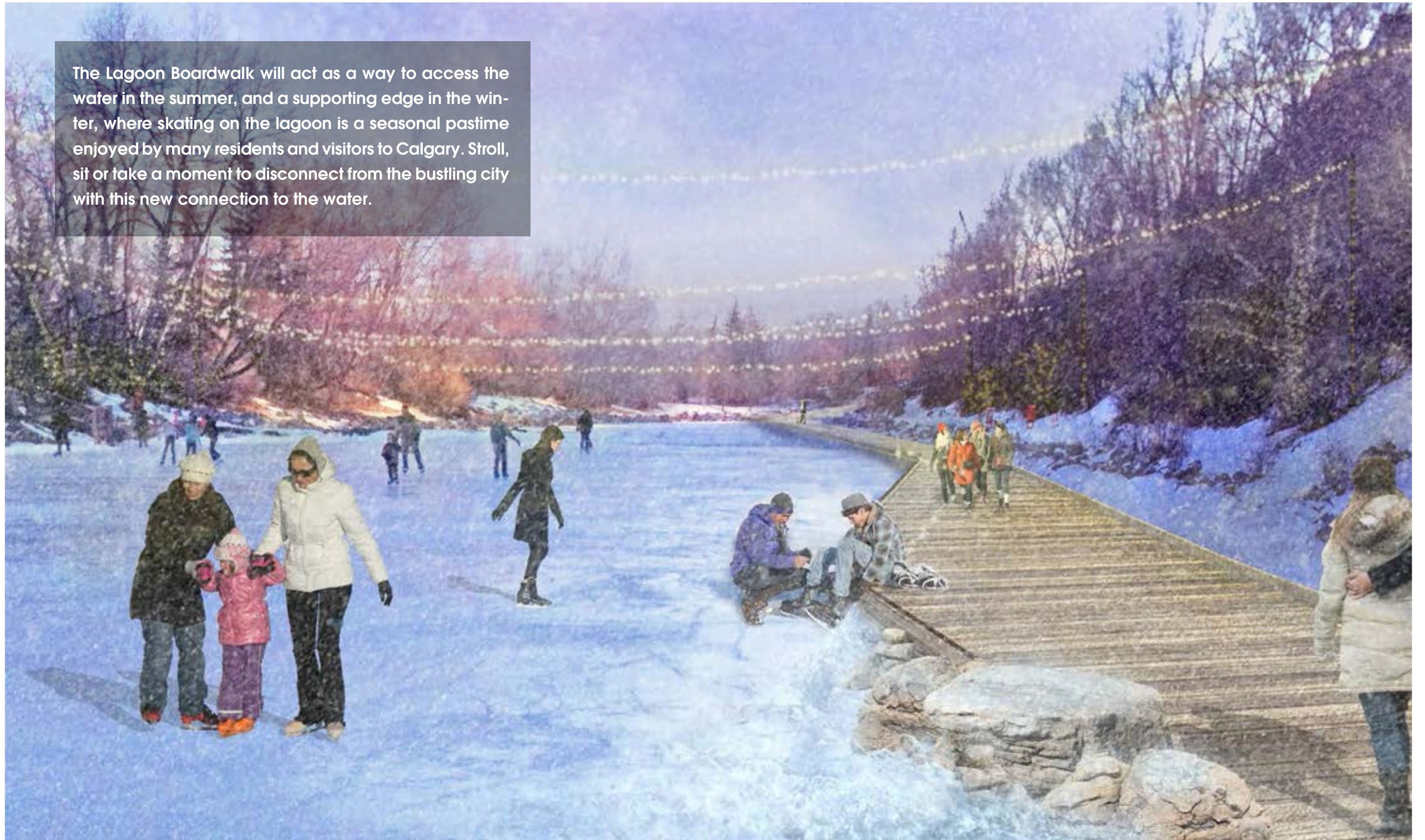
8th Street Plaza +
The Launch

Della Garden

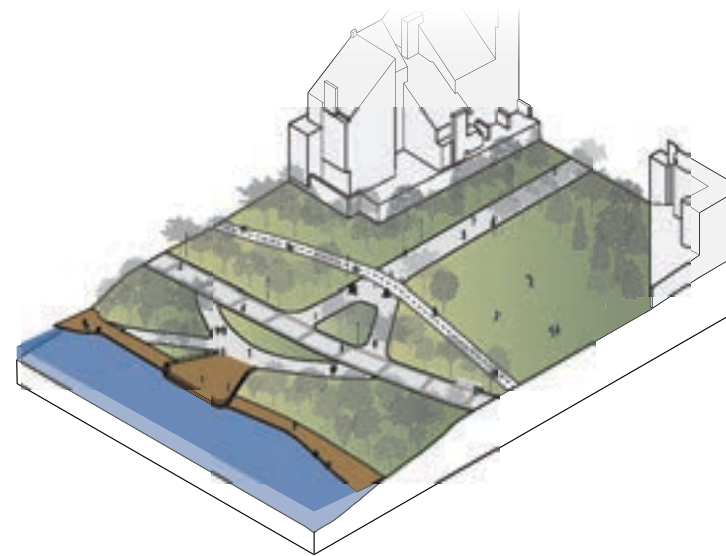
The Great Lawn

Community Garden

The Lagoon Boardwalk will act as a way to access the water in the summer, and a supporting edge in the winter, where skating on the lagoon is a seasonal pastime enjoyed by many residents and visitors to Calgary. Stroll, sit or take a moment to disconnect from the bustling city with this new connection to the water.



East Promenade + Lagoon Boardwalk



The east end of West Eau Claire Park is one of the most picturesque public spaces in Calgary. The proposed design concept for this area will build upon the intrinsic qualities of this end of the park and address the issues concerning circulation conflicts and safety. The east end of the park presents several opportunities for the placement of public art particularly along the promenade and water's edge.

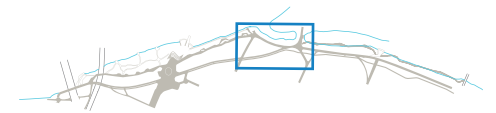
The main promenade will be dedicated to pedestrians. Cyclists will be directed to a cycle path located on the south side of the main promenade and separated by vegetation. Along the banks of the lagoon, a boardwalk will create a new walking experience that includes small gathering spaces. Pedestrians will be able to walk along the lagoon all the way to the Peace Bridge. A lookout and a grand staircase will provide larger gathering spaces with seating.

Vegetation along the bank of the lagoon will be pruned and managed to create better sight-lines along the promenade. Lighting will be supplemented to increase levels for safety while ensuring light pollution does not impact adjacent residents. The gateway at 6th Street will be celebrated with entry features and signage. Desire lines to 5th Street will be formalized, recognizing the importance of this connection to the future cycle track.

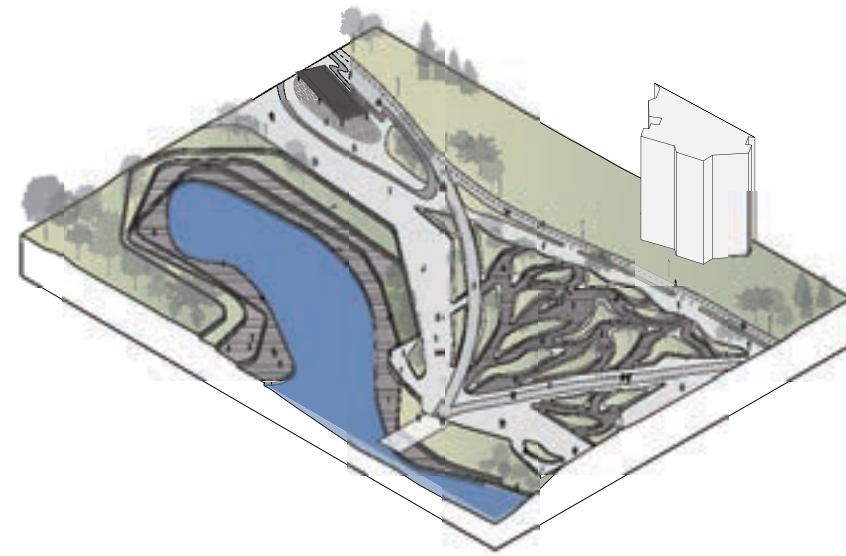


A view from inside the Delta Garden, where people can stroll through, or relax in, intimate garden spaces. The garden will provide a foreground to the Peace Bridge and an escape from the city and busy promenades.





The Cove + The Delta Garden



Located adjacent to the Peace Bridge the Cove will be a prominent spot where visitors can sit and enjoy the waterfront and views to the Peace Bridge. Currently the site is largely under-used and overgrown, providing an unusable space for park users. The Cove offers the opportunity to expand on the success of the Peace Bridge by allowing people that are attracted to the bridge to linger and gather on an urban beach with a view to the Bow. By terracing the land and varying the width of the steps along different segments of The Cove, people can populate this space in a number of different ways. The Cove will also act as reinforcement for the river bank, eliminating erosion and provide access to the water whether high or seasonally low. This Delta Garden presents an exceptional opportunity for an integrated public art installation due to the high number of visitors to this location.

The Delta-Garden design is inspired by the form of a delta. The delta pattern functions to manage pedestrian and cyclist movement toward the Peace Bridge much like water moves through the delta. The pathways funnel people toward the entrance to the bridge while establishing a series of large and small gathering spaces. Conflict between user groups is managed through broad spaces and promenades that give cyclists clear access to cycle path connections. Pedestrians can stay to the perimeter of the space and filter into the Delta Garden at defined entry points.

A small kiosk will create a gathering hub and amenity for park users. Serving light snacks and beverages, the kiosk is envisioned to as a year round destination along the promenade that will enliven the space during the winter and shoulder seasons.



With an improved lighting strategy, users can feel confident and safe in using this space day and night. By allowing this space to remain open, activities can spontaneously occur such as sports or quiet picnic during the day or a stroll at night.

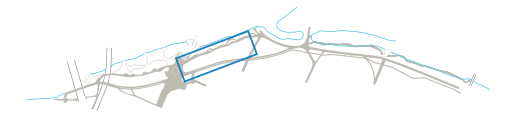


The Great Lawn

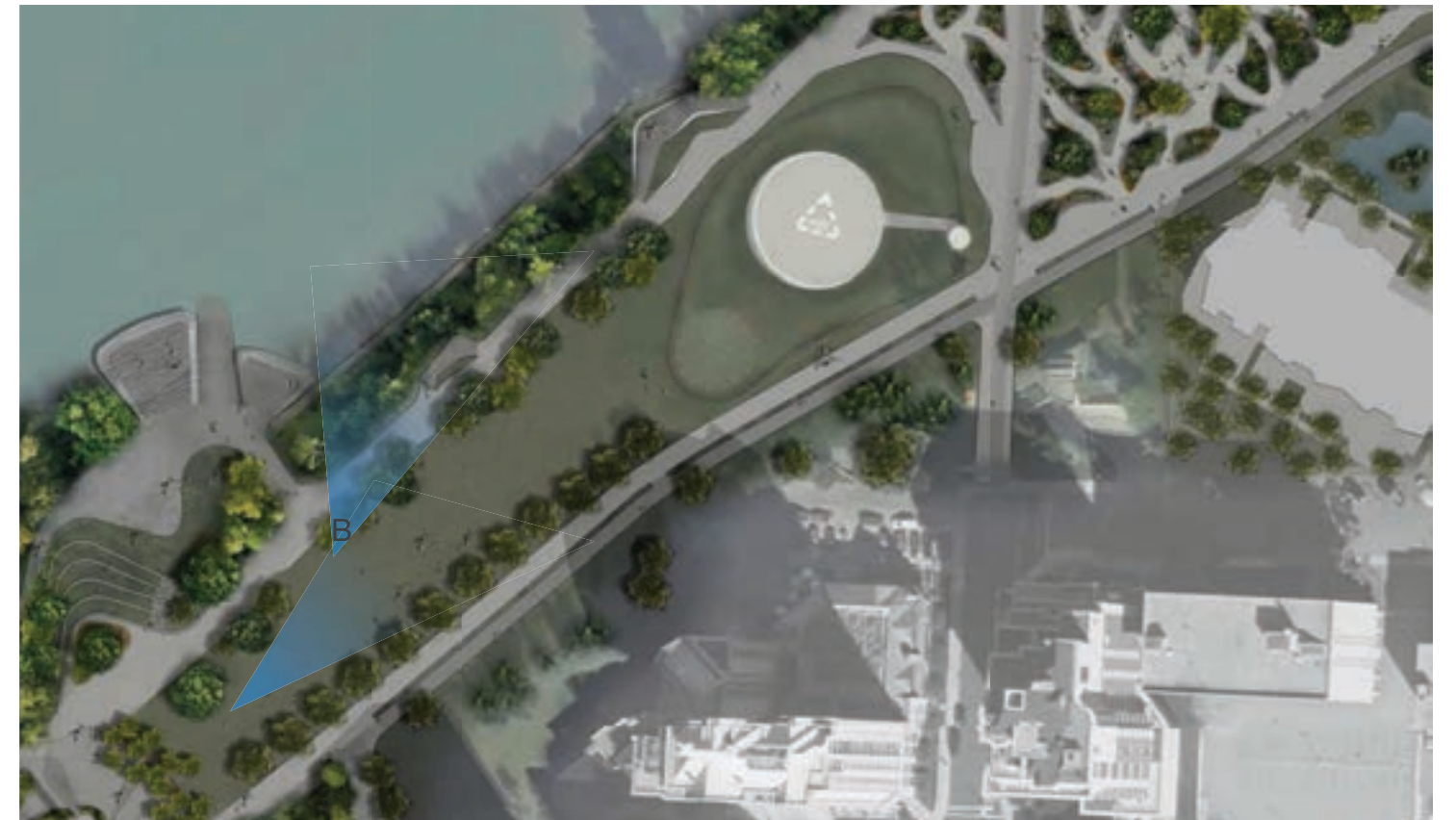
The west end of West Eau Claire Park will be enhanced to create a number of diverse public spaces, connecting and refining existing park elements and expanding park programming. Pedestrian and cyclist circulation remains separated through this zone. The main pedestrian promenade flows along the top of the bank with an expanded surface, adequate lighting, lookout points, and better sight-lines the river.

Adjacent to the 8th Street plaza, to the east, the Great Lawn stretches out and is defined with an urban row of elm trees on the south side and a natural groupings of poplars on the north. To the west is the Peace Sculpture Park, an open area with a framework of low walls and vegetation that define spaces for existing and new monuments and sculptures celebrating peace.

Currently the Helipad is dominating this open space, but by carefully adjusting the fence and dropping it into a ha-ha fence (a sunken landscape design element that creates a vertical barrier while preserving views), we will be able to maintain views through the site while keeping the area secure. Lighting will enhance this space at night, allowing users to feel safe at all time of the day. Programmed uses such as outdoor movies or events could also occur within this space.



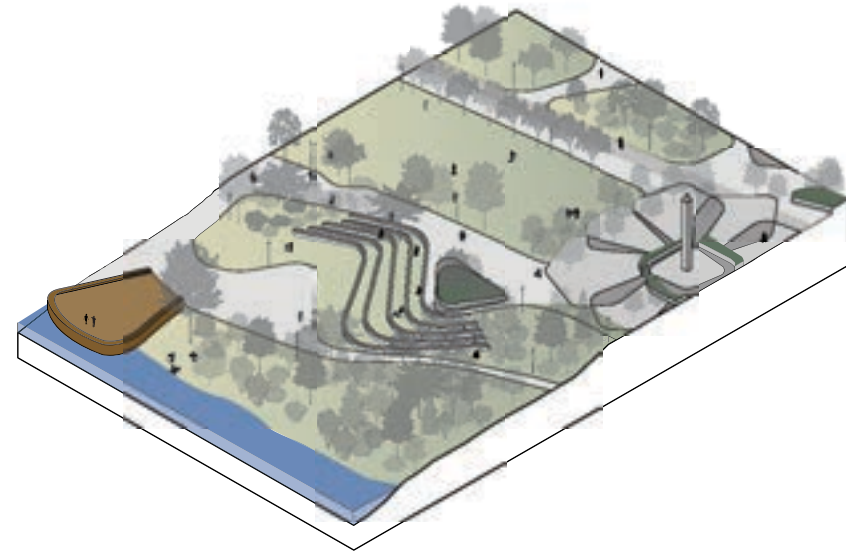
+ Luxembourg Gardens



A well connected riverfront will allow users to access the water at this location and have a place to rest while taking in the beautiful sights along the river's edge. A viewing pier and ramp will allow direct access to the water.



8th Street Plaza + The Launch

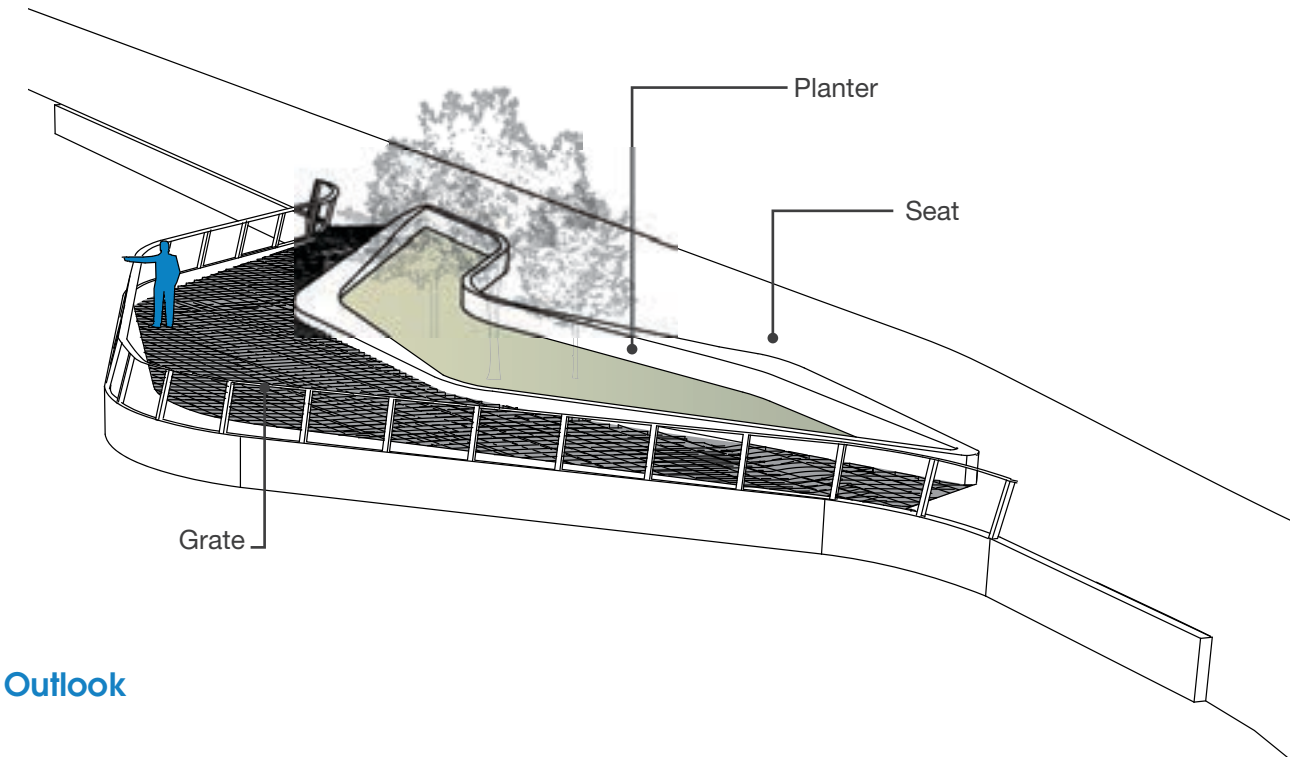
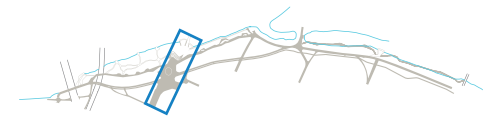


8th Street is terminated with a plaza that connects the city with the river. Landscape terraces step down toward the Launch and orient views toward the Peace Bridge. The terraces open views into the natural area along the river. The lower, natural area will be pruned, a pathway defined, and picnic areas established. Lighting will enhance safety in the area. All elements will be designed to withstand and work with the yearly fluctuations of the river and flooding.

The 8th Street Plaza will be a major gateway for the park, a place where nature and the urban environment interact, drawing people into the park. In order to draw people into the park at this location, paving patterns will be uniform throughout the plaza and spilling into the adjacent under used automobile lane to the south. This access lane will be used as part of the plaza to draw people in, but will also allow for vehicles to access the building to the south.

The boat launch will remain where it currently is, with the addition of two outlooks on either side and a connection to the natural forested area to the west and waterfront walkway to the east.

Seating will border the plaza, allowing the space to become a space for gathering, relaxing and people watching. This new gateway into the park will become a crucial spot for people to access the water, interact and access downtown as well as areas far beyond the site via the regional pathways and separated bike lanes.



River Outlook





Lush green space within a large city can be hard to find. West Eau Claire offers a unique destination where trees are abundant and trails and lookouts can be found even in the busiest spots. The importance of art and culture is displayed within the Peace Sculpture Garden.



Peace Sculpture Garden + River Lookouts



Numerous monuments and sculptures can be found throughout the park. The proposed Peace Sculpture Garden will house these scattered pieces into a museum-like outdoor space. Sculpted walls and straight paths will act as a backdrop to the numerous pieces while guiding people throughout the area. The formal orientation of the space's elements will make this space stand apart, placing importance on the pieces of art that it houses.

To the north of the Peace Sculpture Garden is one of the most natural riverfront spaces that can be found within Calgary's downtown. This unique space is home to large trees, informal pathways and a relief from the adjacent urbanity. It is important to preserve this unique space, while providing lighting for safety and well maintained spaces to dissuade aberrant behavior. New lookouts will be introduced to allow users to overlook the water, while gravel trails will move people throughout the site without disturbing the sensitive surroundings.

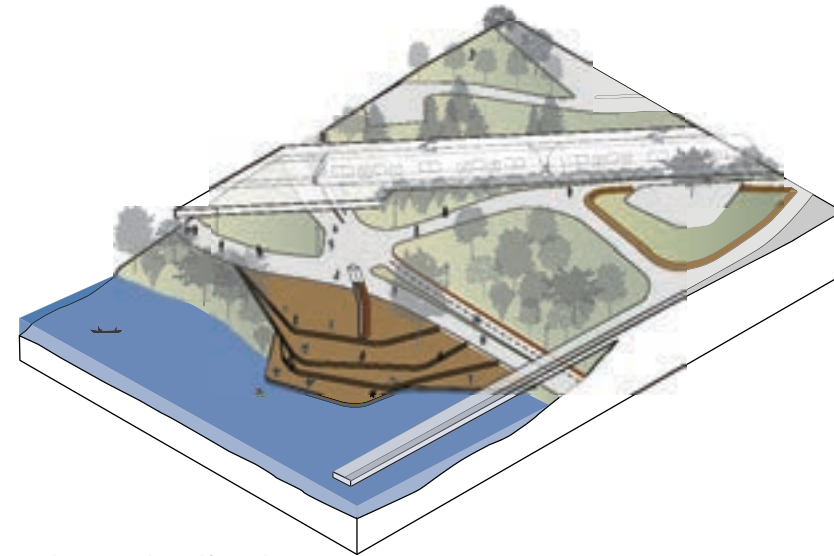
South of the Peace Sculpture Garden will house a new community garden and exercise equipment. Currently this open space is largely under used and dominated by the large parking lot to the south. Trees will act as buffers from this parking lot while the new community garden will draw people in and giving purpose to this under used space. Outdoor exercise equipment will be housed to the north of the community garden, adjacent to the active pedestrian and cycling pathway.





A view of the proposed River Deck, where a previously highly-used but undeveloped site now allows access to the water. Seating areas provide places to rest and view the action. Unique gateway features welcome park users into West Eau Claire Park.

The River Deck



In recent years the Bow River has taken on a new dynamic, creating rifts where there were none and enticing surfers into the water to experience urban surfing. The River Decks takes a largely under used hill and turns it into an active, dynamic space for people to gather and watch the surfers on the water.

This area between two bridges is mainly unappointed despite high cycling and surfing uses in the area. The proposed design introduces terraced decks to access the water and invite users to enjoy the riverfront in a safe and active way.

Gateway features lining the pathways will introduce people to the park as they are entering from the west side, while safety is promoted with separated bike lanes and improved lighting fixtures. Safety will also be promoted with the addition of interesting lighting features underneath all the bridges and underpasses. This area will develop into a major gateway not only to the park but to the inner city from the west. The introduced lighting and gateway features will attract people into West Eau Claire.



+ Underpass Lighting



Wayfinding + Branding

The redevelopment of West Eau Claire Public Park presents the opportunity to give the area an identity. The following series of logos, colours and graphic styles have been developed to work in conjunction with proposed wayfinding and gateway features. An overall brand for the park has been developed with a wordmark and unique logos and names for significant places within the park. This design strategy will create an identity for the park and landmarks that will assist in mental mapping and place recognition.

An effective wayfinding system can become a hallmark of a great park. Although there are City Centre Wayfinding posts in the area there is no signage that indicates features along the riverfront. A wayfinding system for the park will indicate significant park features and amenities as well as providing distance markers and signs indicating pathways to city streets. The separation of cyclists and pedestrians and the addition of identifiable locations throughout the park also heightens the need for simple but unique wayfinding.

The park has no defined boundary and lacks gateways that would signify thresholds the park. Proposed gateway features will be located at key crossings and entrances within the park. Major gateways take the form of an allée of wooden gateway posts that bend at the top to frame the entrance of the park. Minor gateways are demarked by a low wall that slopes away from the path cupping the landscape and creating a vegetated threshold.

