

Flyover Park

Flyover Park is an example of how neglected spaces can improve our city, creating park and play equity for traditionally underserved communities. Driven by community, citizens identified a neglected and perceived unsafe space, and inspired the design of a new inclusive community hub centered around play for all ages. Members of the community developed the park's schematic concepts which allowed our team to finalize the programming, design aesthetics, and proposed materials. After continued collaboration with the community, the park emerged from the depths below the 4th Avenue flyover.

Designed for people, contemporary urban spaces and whimsical play areas flow between active and passive functionality. Changing from an area to be avoided into a park that achieves a “stickiness factor”—a place where all people want and are willing to stay. Flyover Park combines programmed elements with flexible spaces, including an inclusive hillside playground (plus, Calgary's longest roller slide!), family fun games, a bamboo climbing jungle, synthetic turf for fitness use, an iconic gateway feature, and spaces to host pop-up events.

Located partially below the 4th Avenue Flyover, the park embraces the site, incorporating the bridge supports and making them features rather than obstacles. The overpass abutment is now a hillside playground, making use of the topography as a place to play. Beneath the structure are protected games, seating spaces, swings and art canvases on the bridge supports.

Inviting you into the park is the ‘bubble tree’, which was envisioned by the landscape architecture design team – creating a vibrant icon within the park. This custom fabricated lighting feature has been embraced by Calgarians and beyond, having already been featured in movies and tv shows whose producers selected their shots to include this unique park feature.

Greening up the derelict site, disturbed soil with no existing vegetation, is now accessible with pavers and integrates carefully selected plant species, resilient to Calgary's seasons. Selected plants increase site biodiversity, creates pollinator habitat, and highlights the seasons through seasonal colours and textures. To mitigate stormwater run-off from the required hardscape, LID features and a bio-retention area integrate harvested rainwater for newly planted trees and captures stormwater prior to discharging into the City's stormwater system.

Since opening, Flyover Park has transformed an overlooked site into a rarely empty lively neighbourhood focal point which is sparking adjacent commercial developments, and regularly hosts community events. The park has exceeded the projects original goals and objectives: becoming one of Calgary's favourite parks, continually full of laughing children and adults. The parks presence also aligns with a documented decline in social delinquency in the area.

The park is considered an innovative inner-city park that embraces its unique context to deliver a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community space for all residents and visitors. Flyover Park is about finding beauty and functionality in a lost space - it illustrates the potential of transforming leftover transportation infrastructure into vibrant urban parks. This park is a precedent and impetus for other similar space and park improvements throughout the city.