



Calgary River Access Strategy

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Introduction

The Bow and Elbow rivers provide extensive opportunities to greatly enhance the social, economic, and environmental conditions within Calgary. The purpose of this strategy is to allow for better access to river sport and recreation, while also protecting the riparian habitats and allowing for river related businesses to thrive. In doing so, this strategy aims to increase healthy lifestyles, economic opportunities and an appreciation of our river environments, without compromising water management and environmental objectives.

This strategy addresses Notice of Motion “Calgary River Access Strategy (NM2016-20)”, with the intention of providing easier, safer, legal, and environmentally sustainable river access along the Bow and Elbow rivers. River access sites are defined as points that can be used for both launch and egress.

This strategy aims to

- Provide increased user access to the Bow and Elbow rivers, so that Calgarians can enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle
- Promote appropriate access points to access recreation opportunities on the river, while also protecting the riparian environment
- Provide better information around bylaws, safety, river conditions and more
- Create more economic opportunities for various businesses who provide services to help users access the river

The strategy has considered the following:

- High level policy statements and alignment with other river related strategies, particularly the Riparian Strategy
- The identification of stakeholders
- Identification of potential further public access points
- Terms of public access
- Continued public safety consideration
- Delivery models
- Capital and operational estimates required
- Potential bylaw amendments required

PRIORITIES

1. River Access Sites
2. Environment Protection
3. Education
4. Economic Opportunities

Drivers & Challenges

River activities including canoeing, kayaking, rafting and fishing are popular recreation and leisure activities according to the 2013 Alberta Recreation Survey. In the river user survey conducted by Paddle Alberta in Calgary during the summer of 2016, 5214 river users and 2054 boats were recorded. The most common suggestion for improvement was an increase in river access points with more parking, bathrooms and garbage disposal facilities

The Bow River in and around Calgary is famous for world class fishing, providing significant tourism opportunities.

Compared with other major recreation facilities, river activities require little capital or operating investment from The City, yet provide numerous opportunities for a healthy and active lifestyle.

Many groups including the Calgary Rivers Users Alliance (CRUA), the Alberta Whitewater Association (AWA), Paddle Alberta and the fly-fishing community have expressed concern with the lack of access on the Bow and Elbow rivers.

The 2013 Flood contributed to a shift in river bottom channels and the creation of new gravel bars which have the potential to be misused and impact sensitive river environments. Encouraging appropriate river activities can promote an appreciation for the river environment which will likely in turn result in responsible behaviours. By providing policies, guidelines, and most of all education, this strategy will ensure the protection of the river and riparian areas as it will encourage appropriate use of access points.

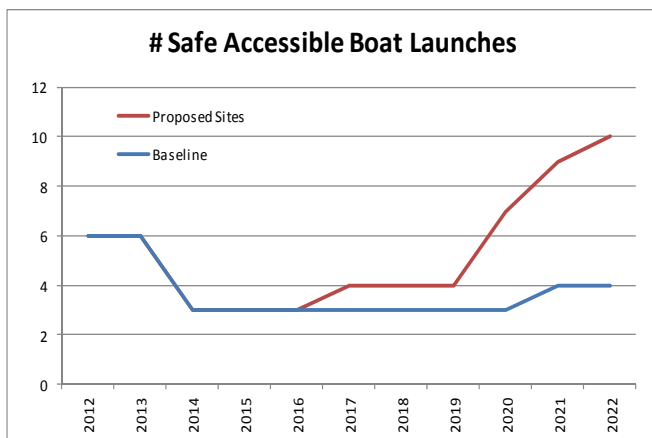
Strategy At A Glance

Priorities	Strategies
<p>PRIORITY 1: RIVER ACCESS SITES</p> <p>The City will implement a plan to have enough fully developed public river access sites for all users by the end of 2022, with a plan for future sites as appropriate.</p> <p>Intended Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage safe river use • Encourage active living • Enjoyment and appreciation of natural environments • Promote historical context and sense of community • Encourage participation in sport and recreation activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each site will have a different typology that accommodates different users, and includes appropriate amenities, signage and parking • River access sites will be safe, and designed in a way that results in few user conflicts and bylaw infractions • River access sites will not conflict with the Calgary Fire Department or Calgary Police Service who will continue to have unrestricted access • River Access sites will incorporate resiliency and flexibility to adapt to floods and a river that frequently changes. A list of potential river access sites will be maintained and reviewed every four years in conjunction with Action Plan, or after a major river-related event (e.g. flood) • New river recreation opportunities will be given due consideration as they arise
<p>PRIORITY 2: ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION</p> <p>The City will ensure the protection of the riverbank by encouraging appropriate use of designated access points, and implementing programs that benefit sensitive riparian areas. In addition, encouraging appropriate river activities can promote an appreciation for the river environment which will likely in turn result in responsible behaviours.</p> <p>Intended Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate protection of riverbank access sites • Encourage appropriate use of river access sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify sensitive riparian areas, or areas prone to erosion, and direct recreation users away from these areas. Encourage use of designated access routes • Contribute to fish habitat by improving conditions within and adjacent to the river, and aim to quantify improvements with The City's established weighted habitat units for fish • Develop partnerships with user groups to promote positive river use, increase awareness of the riparian habitat, and host clean up and tree-wrapping events • Provide garbage and washroom facilities where appropriate to reduce environmental impacts by users • Continue to abide by the Federal regulation to restrict motorized boats within City of Calgary limits
<p>PRIORITY 3: EDUCATION</p> <p>The City will promote appropriate river access, and provide education around preservation of river habitats and safety. Spending time in river areas provides opportunities for Calgarians to connect with nature and helps them to develop an understanding of how Calgary's watershed functions. Increasing public awareness and understanding of how we are all connected to the river is essential to long-term environmental stewardship.</p> <p>Intended Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness of river access options through a variety of mediums • Increase bylaw compliance related to river activities • Build understanding and appreciation of river access and for river and riparian areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River information including access points, safety tips, riparian rehabilitation efforts, current advisories, etc will be posted on www.calgary.ca • A River Map, similar to the Pathways Map, will be available online and in printed form • Signage will be included at each access site, as well as along the river. Signage will indicate type of launch at each site (e.g. boat ramp vs hand launch) as well as information about safety, parking, washrooms, bylaws, etc. Along the river, signage will indicate safe and appropriate exit points • A River Use Ambassador program will be investigated to help provide river use information to users • Public Art will be used as a tool to foster appreciation for river environments

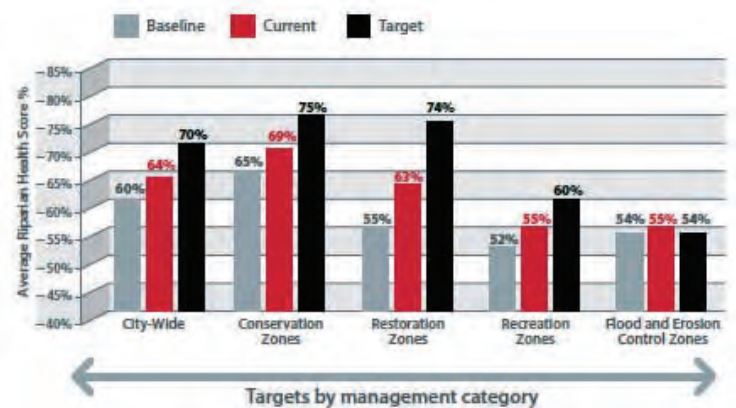
Strategy At A Glance

Priorities	Strategies
<p>PRIORITY 4: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>The river provides economic benefits and contributes to a vibrant city which attracts tourists, employees and future businesses.</p> <p>Intended Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing and new tour operators are better able to operate and provide ecotourism and recreational opportunities New businesses emerge such as equipment rental operators or shuttle services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage other business opportunities such as equipment rental or shuttle services, without creating an overly commercial atmosphere Work with river user groups to leverage funding from applicable grants where appropriate Enhance the profile of Calgary and surrounding area as a city with river-based activities

Results Based Accountability



Trends and Targets of Riparian Health



Story Behind the Baseline

- The Calgary Fire Department requires unrestricted access to their emergency launches. These sites were never intended for, or approved, for public use and in recent years were gated to prevent public use
- Without designated river access sites, existing users may access at any point along the bank often disrupting environmentally sensitive areas
- Currently there are no means to communicate river access sites, regulations, or safety concerns. Information for the public and tourists is extremely limited
- Without proper amenities, litter and public urination continues to be a problem
- An increase in river access sites provides potential to increase healthy active lifestyles and appreciation for the river environments
- From 2007-2010 to 2014-2015, overall riparian health scores in Calgary showed improvement due to restoration and management efforts, natural vegetation recovery, and the beneficial impacts of the 2013 flood on riparian ecology

Strategic Alignment

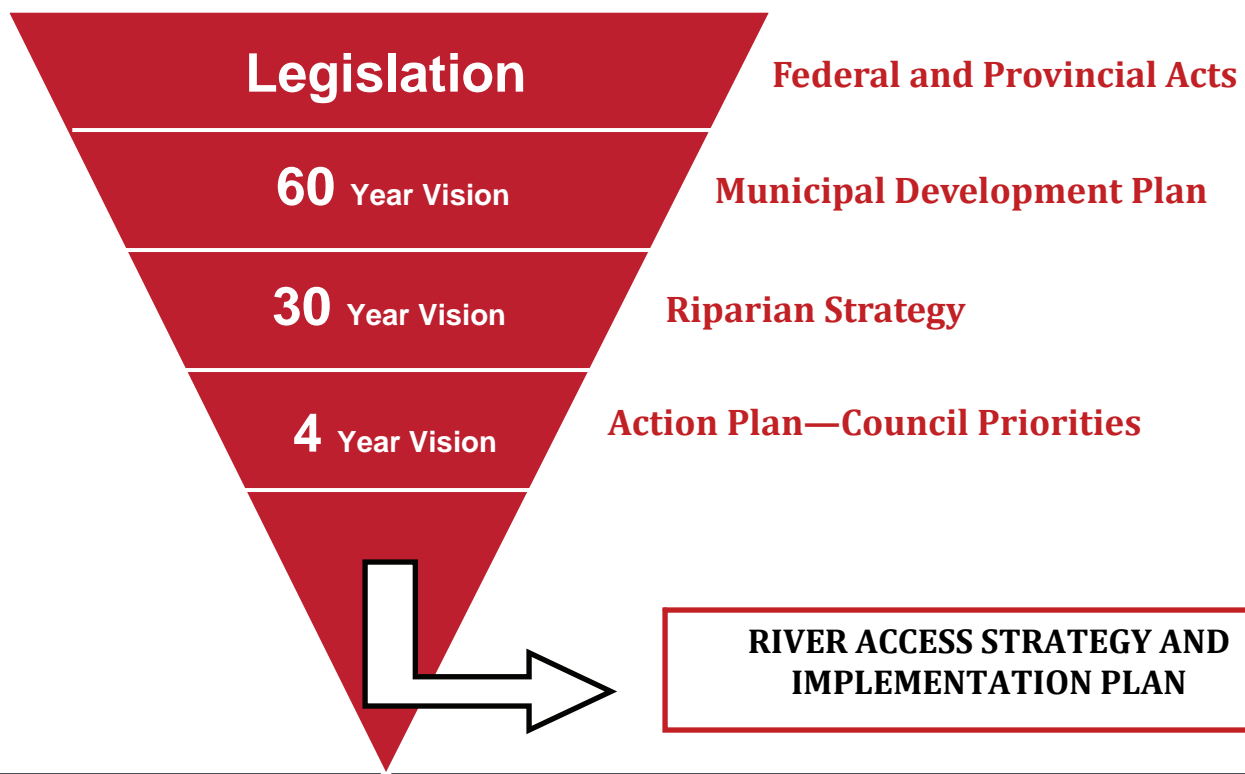
Council Priorities

This project aligns with several Council Priorities but mostly affects the Council Priority “A Healthy and Green City”. The specific strategic actions that this project focuses on are:

H3 Manage the interrelationships between flood protection, water quality and quantity, and land use	This project will require education on land use for river users. Most citizens are unaware of the responsibilities/ roles of the different levels of government, and do not understand the intent behind various bylaws and regulatory acts related to the river.
H6 Continue to build public awareness and understanding of our shared responsibility to conserve and protect the environment	
H8 Continue to invest in indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that address the changing needs of Calgarians	This project will work with community partners and stakeholders to identify infrastructure needed for the public to continue engaging with the rivers in a safe and enjoyable way.
H9 Optimize the existing parks network to ensure Calgarians have access to nature and healthy and active lifestyles.	River access continues to be popular and this is only expected to increase with new sports such as paddle boarding, river surfing, as well as the future opening of Harvie Passage. This strategy will encourage active outdoor recreation, while also cultivating an appreciation for our river environments.

Federal and Provincial Acts

Actions in this strategy are aligned with legal obligations from other levels of government, such as the Navigable Waters Act, Water Act, Public Lands Act and the Fisheries Act. These Acts provide overarching laws that guide activities on the water bodies, and must be upheld. The appropriate applications will be made when the detailed design of river access sites is being contemplated.



Municipal Development Plan

<p>Goal 2.3 — Creating great communities</p> <p>Objective 2.3.4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create quality public parks, open spaces and other community amenities, and make leisure and recreation activities available to all Calgarians • Ensure public access is maintained or improved to major water bodies, including the Bow and Elbow Rivers and Nose Creek, where appropriate access can be acquired and maintained across public lands or from public roads and pathways 	<p>This strategy will ensure increased access to river recreation activities for all Calgarians, including those who may experience barriers to participation.</p>
<p>Goal 2.6 — Greening the city</p> <p>Objective 2.6.4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological network: maintain biodiversity and landscape diversity, integrating and connecting ecological networks throughout the city • Protect aquatic and riparian habitats 	<p>Environmental considerations have been paramount in the development of this strategy, to ensure sensitive riparian areas are protected. By diverting traffic to stable access points, and away from environmentally sensitive areas, this strategy helps to repair and sustain our riparian environments.</p>

Riparian Strategy

<p>Cornerstone: Protecting Riparian Health</p> <p>Goal: Riparian areas and connectivity are sustained/restored</p> <p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect sensitive riparian areas from future development and degrading land use activities 	<p>Sensitive riparian areas was a key factor in site selection, as sites at or near a sensitive riparian were either excluded, or extensive mitigations were included in the access design.</p>
<p>Cornerstone: Connecting Calgarians</p> <p>Goal: Calgarians value, enjoy and care for riparian areas</p> <p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for Calgarians to connect with riparian areas that are in balance with conservation • Prioritize and target communication and education efforts • Invest in strategic partnerships and programming and build capacity where needed <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing community programming in areas where behaviour degrades riparian areas or where there are significant changes in management 	<p>This strategy focuses on appropriate river use and education is a major component of the strategy. Through these education initiatives it is expected that we can foster an appreciation for sensitive riparian environments among river users.</p>
<p>Cornerstone: Recognizing Value</p> <p>Goal: The economic value of riparian areas is recognized</p> <p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create programs that deliver a net positive triple bottom line benefit • Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to fund programs effectively 	<p>Creation of economic opportunities is a priority in the River Access Strategy. Services that range from equipment rental, to shuttle services, and courses not only provide opportunities for local businesses, but also encourage appropriate river use, that can in turn help to protect the riparian environment. Working in partnership with local businesses, the River Access Strategy has made it easy (e.g. by providing education) to convey important environmental messages to users that access services of these businesses.</p>
<p>Cornerstone: Aligning Activities</p> <p>Goal: Riparian areas planning and policy is consistent and effective</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align policies and programs that apply to riparian areas across the Corporation 	<p>Efforts have been made to ensure that the principles included in the Riparian Strategy are reflected in the River Use Strategy</p>

Bylaw Review

Parks Bylaw 20M2003

There are a number of provisions in the Parks and Pathway Bylaw 20M2003 which may impede river access. The bylaw allows the Director of Calgary Parks to permit the activity, however in order to provide clarity, the following clauses in particular should be considered for revision during the next Parks and Pathway Bylaw review:

- 14. No Person shall enter, wade, swim, or skate in, or upon any body of water which flows through, is adjacent to or is located within a Park unless such activity is specifically allowed by the Director pursuant to this Bylaw.
- 16. No Person shall launch a boat, canoe, kayak or similar craft from or within a Park except where specifically allowed by the Director.
- 10. No Person shall operate a Vehicle in a Park except on a Park Roadway.
- 11. No Person shall park a Vehicle in a Park except in areas set aside for Vehicle parking.

Glenmore Park Bylaw 9018

This bylaw, in 11.1(c) permits on the waters of the Glenmore Reservoir: a canoe, kayak, dinghy, punt, sailboat or rowing scull used by a person for short term, occasional, casual recreational purposes only. Any such canoe, kayak, dinghy, punt, sailboat or rowing scull so used shall not be inflatable and shall not be powered by a motor of any sort. 11.2 stipulates that no person shall place or remove a Boat in or from the waters of Glenmore Reservoir from any place along its shore which is not specifically designated and marked for such a use.

Council Policy

A proposed Council Policy on Recreational Access to City Land Adjacent to Rivers and Reservoirs was considered during the project. It was determined that a formal policy was not required as the Parks and Pathway Bylaw 20M2003 provides sufficient authority to implement the Strategy. Further, operational procedures and working committees already exist within The City to ensure Business Units are able to work together to facilitate river access.



Stakeholders

The City reached out to external stakeholders through an online engagement program on The City's Engage web portal from October 3 to November 30, 2016. Three hundred and nine unique visitors accessed the River Access engagement page, with 98 visitors completing an online questionnaire. Additionally visitors contributed 206 posts on three discussion forum pages (environment, river access sites and transportation).

Strong support for development of all sites was evident, with the exception of Point McKay. Highest priority for development was expressed for Graves Bridge, 17 Avenue, Shouldice Park, Stoney Trail, Douglasdale and Seton. Stakeholders indicated a variety of amenities should be considered ranging from washrooms and picnic areas, to gear washing stations and business opportunities. There was a great deal of support for educational tools including signage, maps, a mobile app, awareness events, and public art.

The following stakeholders were engaged during the development of this strategy:

Internal Stakeholders

The following Business Units play an important role in river related activity, be it ensuring availability of comprehensive and complementary recreation opportunities, or protecting the environment, or ensuring a safe community:

- Calgary Parks
- Calgary Fire
- Water Resources and Water Services
- Calgary Community Standards
- Calgary Recreation
- Calgary Police Service
- Calgary Transportation
- Law



External Stakeholders

The following external stakeholders consist of a variety of groups and individuals that represent river users, businesses, environmentalists, and those that live near the river:

- Calgary River Users Alliance: This umbrella group formed early 2016 to improve recreational access to Calgary's Bow and Elbow Rivers, and addresses needs and concerns that are common to recreational river users. The alliance consists of representatives of recreation and conservation groups and businesses in the city, including canoeing, kayaking, rafting, paddle-boarding, river surfing, and fishing.
- Environmental Organizations including Nature Calgary, and Calgary River Valleys, and watershed groups
- RiverWatch, and educational group that delivers programs and river tours
- River orientated businesses such as raft rental companies or tour operators
- Community associations near the river, relevant Civic Partners, and Sport Calgary
- General park users such as cyclists, dog walkers, pedestrians, and more.
- Residents and businesses who live or operate near the river or an access site
- The Province of Alberta, Alberta Environment and Parks, who are developing their own Bow River Access Plan, and have expressed interest in partnering with The City of Calgary, where appropriate

Priority 1: Identification of River Access Sites

Site Criteria

River Access sites are defined as sites used for both launching and egress. Through engagement processes, the following criteria have been identified as being important considerations when determining river access sites:

Land Ownership/Stewardship	Sites must be owned and actively managed by The City. Private sites are not considered unless The City can enter into a long term land use agreement. Sites that are owned by The City, but leased long term to another party (ie: civic partner) are not considered unless the leasee expresses interest. Similarly, sites that will eventually be turned over to The City, but are currently held by another party (ie: Developer, or Province) are only given future consideration.
Environmentally Sensitive Area	Environmentally sensitive sites, identified through the Riparian Strategy and Riparian Action Program, are to be avoided. Often it is better to avoid healthy areas and instead put access sites on areas that have already demonstrate damaged fish habitats or water quality.
Access via Road/Transit	Safe access has been given consideration. Sites that would require major transportation modifications in order to safely get on or off a major roadway (especially with a trailer) are generally eliminated. Access that requires use of a private roads was also a factor that eliminated some sites.
Parking	Sites have adequate existing parking, or ability to expand parking. Some sites, particularly in inner city, do not have parking but have been included as it may be possible to use transit or for residents to walk to the site.
Slope	Sites must not exceed a riverbank side slope of 8%. Some steeper bank sites could possibly be excavated to obtain this flatter slope, but would be less preferable.
Pathway Interface	It is inevitable that most sites will be located near the river pathway. For a site to be considered, mitigations must be available to limit potential user conflicts or collisions.
User Conflict	Sites that are near areas with other conflicting uses, particularly off leash areas are avoided in order to minimize user conflict. Sites near neighbouring residences require engagement.
Washroom or Change Room Facilities	Sites must have the ability to have at least portable washrooms.
Garbage and Recycling Cans	To eliminate litter, all sites must be able to contain an appropriate number of litter and recycling cans.
Picnic Tables and Benches	The ability to place an appropriate number of picnic tables and benches is required.
History of Usage	Sites that are already being used have been given due consideration as citizens expect these sites to be available.
Other "Use Specific" Amenities	In some cases a site will need to be able to accommodate use specific equipment such as spectator seating, wave channel, slalom gates, etc.

Site Typology

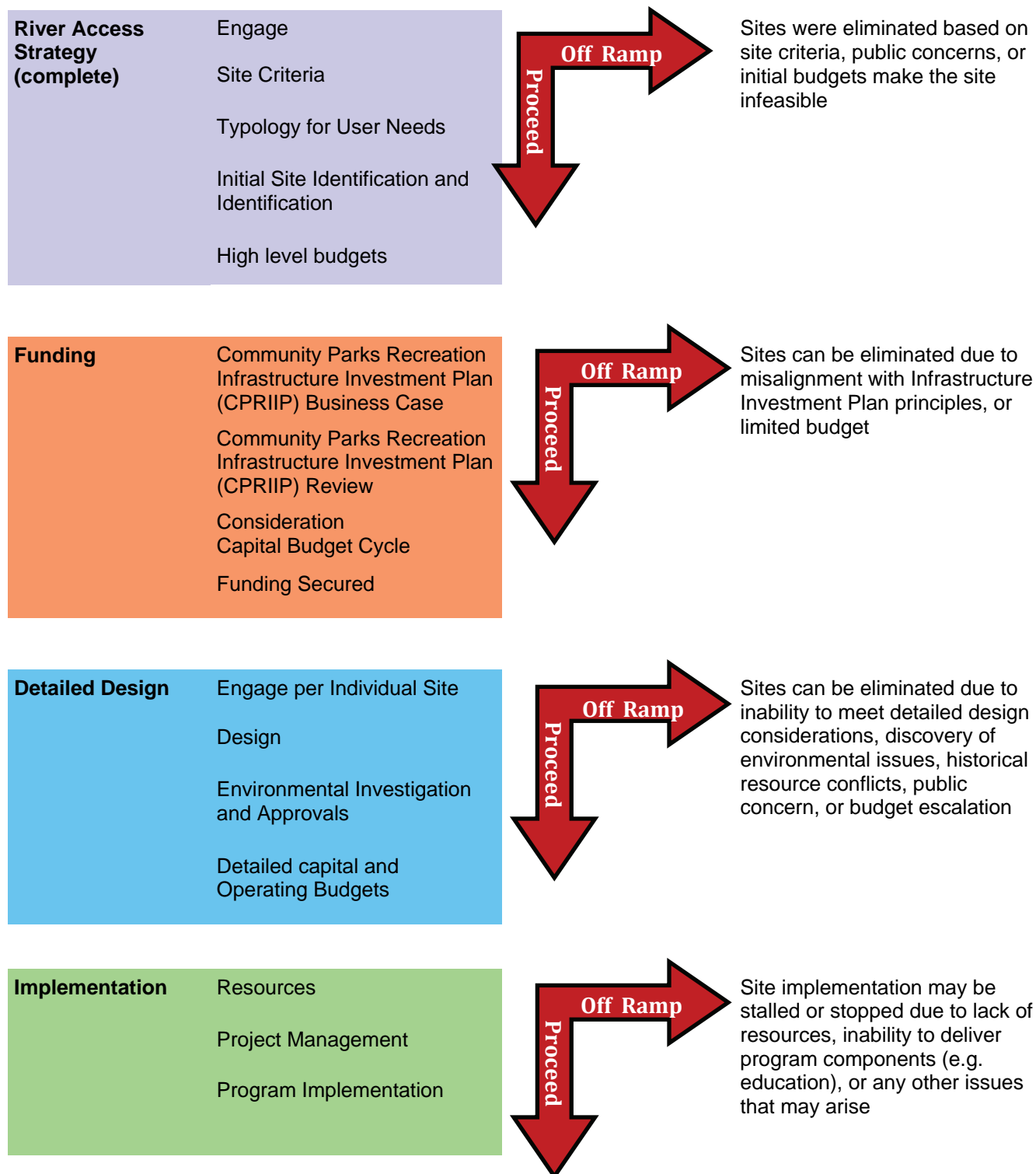
The following classification of sites has been developed to help users identify which site would best meet their needs. Most river access sites can be used for launch or egress. Amenities would be outlined for each site in any promotional or educational material, and signage will be developed.

Preferred Boat Ramps	These sites would accommodate a boat trailer. A boat ramp here would likely be more substantial (ie: concrete blocks). The site would likely have plumbed in washrooms, ample parking, and possibly even change rooms or vendor services. These sites are also useful for those requiring hand launches (ie: for canoes, rafts, kayaks, etc).
Boat Ramps with Restrictions	These sites would accommodate a boat trailer and have a boat ramp. The use of flexible boat ramps is being explored as these are portable and may be relocated in the event of flood damage. The site would have limited parking and outdoor or portable toilets. These sites are also useful for those requiring hand launches (ie: for canoes, rafts, kayaks, etc).
Preferred Walk-in, Hand Launches	Hand launches are in areas with a gradual slope where it is relatively easy to carry in a craft such as a canoe, raft, kayak, etc. There is no trailer access and therefore these sites are not appropriate for drift boats. There may be washrooms at these sites but are most likely to be portable toilets. Most sites have nearby parking, but some sites might be more geared towards local residents, therefore parking would be limited.
Walk-in, Hand Launches with Restrictions	Some of these sites may be included in promotional material but with cautions that the site is not ideal due to site constraints such as parking or challenging river conditions.



Site Development Process

The sites contained in this Strategy require further review and will be taken through a staging process before being implemented. The following chart indicates the typical stages of development for each site, and potential for “off ramps” that may result in a site implementation not being completed. This process is intended to be flexible, and some steps may already be covered if being done in conjunction with another project.



Detailed Design Considerations

As detailed design proceeds for any of these sites, the following elements will need in-depth consideration:

Safety

Launch sites must mitigate any safety concerns such as flow velocity for entry/exit, nearby river hazard features or bridge piers, ability for emergency services to access site, potential user conflicts that could cause collisions, or undesired behavior that could pose a threat. There should also be mechanisms to inform users of temporary concerns such as hazards or water quality issues.

Safety signage guidelines from the Canadian Dam Safety Association, can recommend effective signage to warn of river hazards, and should be consulted when it comes time for signage design.

Fire and Emergency Access

Calgary Fire Department and Calgary Police must have exclusive unrestricted access to the river so that they may quickly respond to any emergency.

Environment

As part of the City of Calgary approval processes, sites may require biophysical impact assessments. Other studies may be required under the Provincial and Federal regulatory processes.

The Riparian Decision Matrix for river engineered projects should also be consulted. This matrix, developed by Water Resources, is intended as a decision support tool for City of Calgary projects involving bank stabilization, restoration and/or river engineering. The purpose of the matrix is to ensure bioengineering practices are applied to the maximum extent possible within Calgary.

Flexibility

The river is ever changing, especially in times of high water flow. New channels emerge, debris can become a hazard, and inlets can become dry. River Access Sites should be reviewed at least every four years in conjunction with the Action Plan process, or after each high flow event. The sites should be flexible and able to change in response to new conditions. One solution is to use an inexpensive tied concrete mat (ie: "Flexamat®" or "Armorflect®").

Accessibility

The launch sites should incorporate access reviews that comply with the 2016 Access Design Standards and recommendations from The City's Advisory Committee on Accessibility. Features such as tactile signage with raised lettering, wide barrier free trails, ramps instead of stairs, and appropriate font and colours on signs further away, are just some features that can make a site more accessible. Engagement with stakeholder groups such as Disabled Sailing Association, Calgary Rowing Club and Calgary Between Friends Club may also reveal features that will make launch sites accessible for all. Finally, The City may be able to utilize ambassadors from the Alberta Parks "Push to Open Nature" program, to provide accessibility recommendations.

Exploration of partnerships with local raft rental businesses may allow for access for those with economic disadvantages. The City could provide opportunities for these businesses to be featured in promotional material, if they would be willing to participate in The City's Fair Entry program and accept The City's Fee Assistance card.

Riparian Management Zone	Hard Engineering	Bioengineering /Soft Engineering
Flood and erosion control zones	Permitted As necessary	Preferred Must be evaluated during design
Conservation zones	Prohibited	Required Designs should minimize environmental impacts
Restoration zones	Discretionary Highly discouraged	Preferred Must be evaluated during design
Recreation zones	Discretionary Highly discouraged	Preferred Design should minimize environmental impacts

*Contact City of Calgary Water Resources for more information about example sites and locations.

Riparian Decision Matrix: Further zone information can be found at www.calgary.ca/UEP/Water/Documents/Water-Documents/Calgary_Riparian_ManagementCategories_MAPS.pdf

Bow River North (BN)

Proposed River Access Sites



*Montgomery/Home Road:
The trail to the river could be
cleared and potentially graded.*

SITE	LAUNCH TYPE	CURRENT STATE	FUTURE PLAN
BN01 West Baker Park (Scenic Bow Rd under Stoney Tr NW)	Preferred Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	Stoney Trail is a current boat ramp with parking and portable toilets. The site is relatively busy. It is the only site available to drift boats north of the weir at Harvie Passage. To accommodate increased use, additional launch ramps and parking will be required. Due to the expected volume of users at this site, plumbed washrooms are also required.	This site requires expansion to accommodate a significant increase in users. As Bowness Park is currently over capacity, paddlers and rafters will be encouraged to use this site instead. Further, Shouldice Park requires upgrades before drift boat traffic will be permitted there. To accommodate increased use, additional launch ramps, fishing platform and parking will be required. Due to the expected volume of users at this site, plumbed washrooms are also included in the plan.
BN02 Bowness	Hand Launch with Restrictions	The eddies at Bowness Park provide essential training area for new kayakers. However, this park experiences heavy use and parking can often not be found.	This site remains available as a hand/carry-in launch. However, other than paddling lessons (canoeists and kayakers), users will be strongly encouraged to use Stoney Trail instead.
BN03 Shouldice	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch (with restrictions in short term)	A single ramp exclusive for Fire emergency access exists. Accessing the ramp requires crossing multiple pathways. Install additional launch to ensure exclusive emergency access and reduce user conflicts. To be done in conjunction with park redesign	In the short term, a concrete mat (ie: Flexamat® or Armorflex®) can be placed beside the existing concrete ramp, allowing for both public and emergency access. Pathway and road signage can be placed to reduce the likelihood of a collision, as well as a reduced speed limit. In the long term, a second public ramp could be located approximately 150m downstream of the existing ramp, on the west side of Shouldice Park. This would replace the concrete map at the first location and provide more space for users.
BN04 Montgomery /Home Road	Hand Launch	This location is currently being used as a hand launch. There is a garbage can, washroom, and parking lot available. Grading and widening a path is required	This slope on this site is fairly steep and should be flattened. Also the trail to the river could be cleared to allow for safer access, and a railing installed to preserve the riparian vegetation.
BN05 Edworthy Park	Hand Launch Wading	Carry in access is currently being done on both the north and south sides of the river. The north side is especially steep and dangerous. Parking is also difficult on the north side of this park.	Users are encouraged to walk across the Boothman Bridge and only utilize the south side for access/egress. Signage, and a post and cable fence will be installed on the north side to discourage users from entering on this side. Promotional material will encourage users to park on the south side.

Bow River Centre (BC)

Proposed River Access Sites

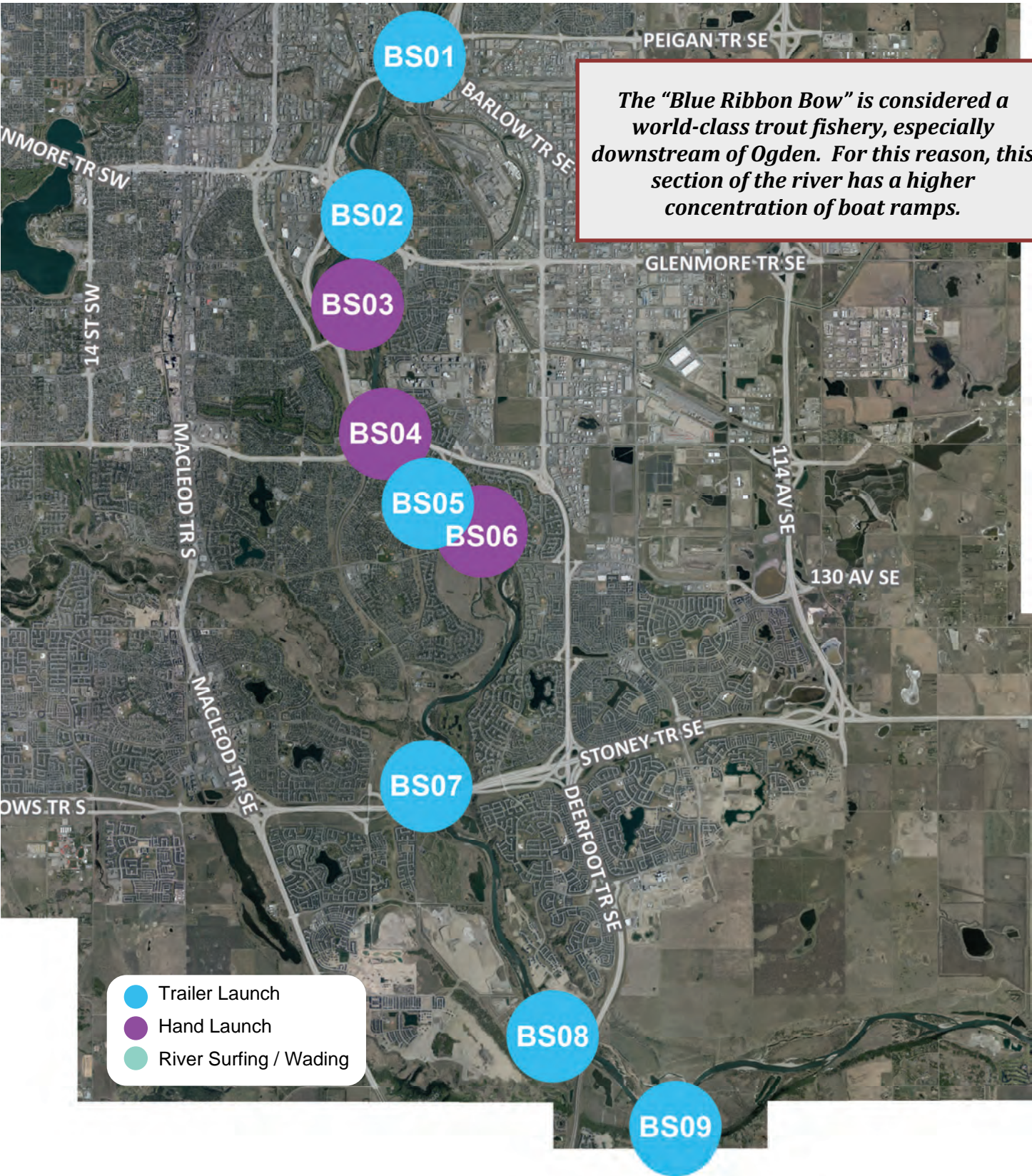


SITE	LAUNCH TYPE	CURRENT STATE	FUTURE PLAN
BC01 The Wave (at 10 St SW)	Hand Launch	This existing site is quickly gaining popularity with river surfers.	Signage upstream on the river could be made available to warn other users to keep left and avoid the surfers. A portable toilet is required at this site. To protect the riverbank from erosion, a concrete mat is recommended for this location.
BC02 8 Street SW	Hand Launch	This current hand launch site is also used as an emergency access boat ramp. The Calgary Fire Department does not feel these users provide a conflict as they can easily move out of the area in the event of an emergency.	No changes to this site.
BC03 Sunnyside (Memorial Drive at 3 St NW)	Hand Launch	This popular site is located on the north side of the Bow River, across from Prince's Island Park, near the Memorial Drive Parking lot. Access from the river to the pathway is steep and users need to climb up a rocky and steep embankment.	Rip rap stairs are planned at this site to mitigate the steep slope which could cause safety concerns. An opening in a guard rail, or a gate, would allow river users to access the bridge without going to the main pathway where the potential exists for conflict with cyclists, runners, etc. Additional garbage can in this area is also recommended.
BC04 Centre Street SE	Hand Launch with restrictions	This existing site is not often used as there is no parking. However, it could be ideal for residents living nearby. Stairs allow for easy access to the river.	No changes to this site.

SITE	LAUNCH TYPE	CURRENT STATE	FUTURE PLAN
BC05 East Village	Hand Launch	This existing site has stairs allowing for easy access to the river. While parking is available now, after future development is completed, this site may only be feasible for nearby residents.	No changes to this site.
BNC06 St. Patrick's Island	Hand Launch Wading	A current hand launch location exists with easy access to parking and amenities. This site could be popular after current construction in the area is completed.	No changes to this site.
BC07 Inglewood Bridge (at 12 Street SE)	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	The location of this new boat ramp would be approximately where the current bridge is being removed. This site is critical as it is the only egress point for drift boats downstream of Stoney Trail before the weir. Without this site, there is a significant safety concern for those river users who were not aware of the weir, or that they could not exit the river at this location.	This site would require all components of an access site including a launch, washrooms, etc. Parking would likely need to be upgraded or located off site in another area of Inglewood, or near the Zoo.
BC08 Harvie Passage	Hand Launch Wading	With the redevelopment of the passage, river use in this area is expected to increase with general kayak use and tournaments	With the increased use, a temporary structure change room for kayakers and canoeists is recommended.
BC09 Albert Park / Harvie Passage (Deerfoot Tr at 17 Av SE)	Hand Launch	This area is currently being used for staging for construction of Harvie Passage. Normally it is a quiet park with some pathway and off leash use. This launch would likely be used by users of Harvie Passage as an exit point	This site could be used as an exit site for users of Harvie Passage. More important it will provide a sight line to the weir for both public and emergency personnel, which could be critical in times of emergency. Budget estimates have been included to mitigate any traffic issues that arise due to access from the busy 17 Ave SE/Blackfoot Trail. The site should be monitored on a regular basis as it is prone to erosion and located in a riparian conservation zone
BC10 17 Ave Bridge (west)	Boat Ramp with Restrictions And Hand Launch	The one launch at this site is designated for emergency access only. The Calgary Fire Department has granted access to River Watch, an educational group that utilizes rafts. The general boating community has a strong desire for this site to re-open to the general public. The site is further complicated as the access road is directly beside the Sobow condominium development, and this area will undergo further construction with the upcoming transitway bridge.	The road to the launch beside Sobow requires widening so that two vehicles can pass each other, which is especially critical in the event of an emergency where the Calgary Fire Department requires access. Nearby washrooms and other amenities are required, which could be done in conjunction with Bend in the Bow to increase efficiency and eliminate the chance of duplicate work. Parking would be available near the ball diamond field, south of this site. Because of the multi-use and potential congestion in this area, drift boat users will be encouraged to use the new Refinery Park site once it is built.

Bow River South (BS)

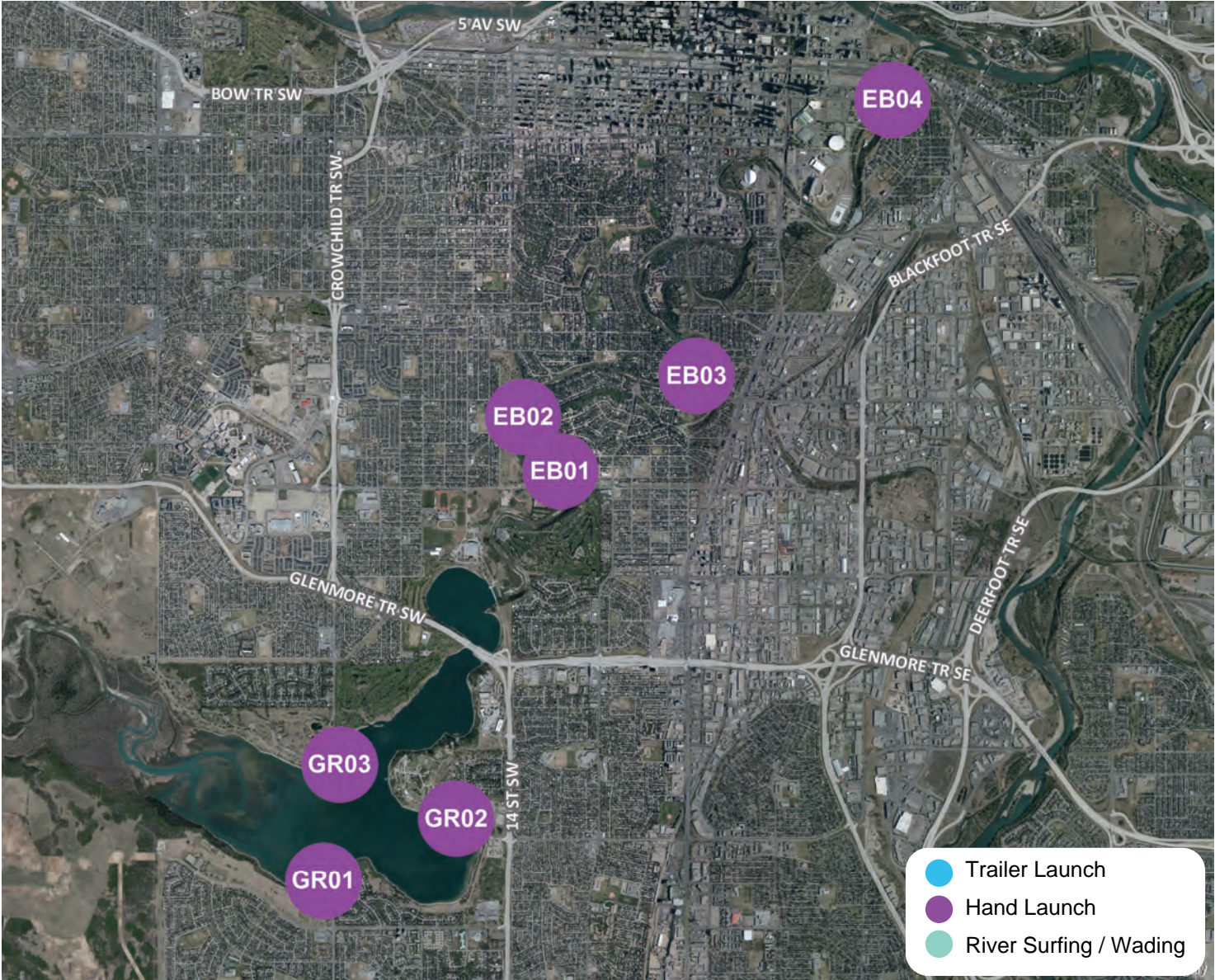
Proposed River Access Sites



SITE	LAUNCH TYPE	CURRENT STATE	FUTURE PLAN
BS01 Ogden Bridge (Ogden Rd under Deerfoot Tr SE)	Preferred Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	Work to address the contamination at Refinery Park is expected to be completed in 2018. However, the northern tip of the park could be fenced off and utilized for a boat launch. This site will alleviate demand on the 17 Ave launch in Pearce Estates Park, which is currently not open to the public.	A concrete mat or ramp could be added to this site to make is available for use late summer 2017. After cleanup of the site, to better accommodate more users, improvements would include a large parking lot and other amenities
BS02 Graves Bridge (Heritage Dr under Glenmore Tr SE)	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	This site is currently being used as a trailer boat ramp. Inappropriate use at this site with vehicles driving up and down the length of the gravel bar may be affecting the river environment and potentially jeopardizing this location as a launch site. Concrete lock blocks are being looked at as a way to mitigate the current issues	Concrete lock blocks have been proposed to Alberta Environment and Protection as a mean to prevent driving on the gravel bar. Once this is done, the site does not require further changed.
BS03 Carburn Park	Hand Launch	This site is currently a hand launch but was investigated as a potential boat launch. Because of the environmental sensitivity and potential for user conflict, it was determined it is better suited to remain a hand launch.	No changes to this site. This site should be re-evaluated on a regular basis to determine if the launch is having a negative effect on nearby fish spawning habitat.
BS04 Ivor Strong Bridge	Hand Launch	Currently being used as a hand launch.	The site requires only a portable toilet and signage
BS05 Douglasdale	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	This site is occasionally being used as a hand launch. Because of it's proximity to an existing park and parking lot, it is being recommended for a boat ramp.	The site has existing amenities and needs only a minor roadway, concrete mat, and bank stabilization and grading. This site will need to be monitored closely for erosion.
BS06 Douglasdale South	Hand Launch	This existing hand launch was recently upgraded as part of a flood recovery project.	No changes needed to this site
BS07 Fish Creek	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	This Provincial site is considered to be an ideal ramp and is an important component of the river access system.	No developments recommended by The City at this time
BS08 Pine Creek	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	This site is not currently being used, but has great potential as a trailer boat launch site. The other side of the river near Cranston is being used, but is on private developer land with unsafe parking and unsafe pedestrian crossing. Development of this site would alleviate this situation.	This site would require a ramp and all amenities.
BS09 Policeman's Flats	Boat Ramp and Hand Launch	This popular egress site is just outside the city limits. As the launch is on private land, it's future is not secure. The Province has a desire to move the Policeman's Flats launch therefore opening up potential partnership opportunities	The City of Calgary will explore a potential partnership with the Province to create a new launch in the Seton vicinity

Elbow River (EB)

Proposed River Access Sites



SITE	CURRENT STATE	FUTURE PLAN
GR01 GR02 GR03 Glenmore Reservoir	These current sites are popular with kayakers and canoeists. The types of uses at Glenmore Reservoir are limited due to water quality concerns (ie: no inflatables or stand up paddle boards are permitted).	Lack of parking at these sites provides challenges to users who often need to go a long distance with their canoe or kayak from their parking spot to the water. Additional parking near the waters edge is recommended for this site.
EB01 Sandy Beach EB02 Sandy Beach North EB03 Stanley Park	These popular sites are well used by those with rafts, canoes and kayaks.	To protect the riparian environment , educational and directional signage can promote access at only designated locations. Appropriate amenities should minimize behaviour such as littering or public urination. These sites also require appropriate measures to respond to frequent health advisories due to high fecal coliform levels. This could include signage, hand washing stations, and other recommendations from Alberta Health Services.
EB04 Lindsay Park	Without adequate parking, this site could only be used if shuttle service is provided, or if the Talisman Centre wanted to provide parking.	If this site is to be used, parking must be addressed. Parking and shuttle options could be investigated, if necessary. This site may not be required if other sites can accommodate users.
EB05 McDonald Bridge	With small modifications to the guard rail, this site would be ideal as the last take out site before the Bow River, as a small parking lot already exists.	Introduce portable washrooms, garbage cans, and modify the guard rail.

What About Fort Calgary or the Deane House in Inglewood?

While these sites have been used as take out sites for users, there are a number of problems associated with them including:

- The confluence may be sensitive fish habitat
- These sites have historical significance which could risk disturbance
- Lack of parking in Inglewood and at Fort Calgary
- Likely higher levels of fecal coliform in this area

Water Advisories

River water quality can vary due to heavy rainfall, upstream sources such as agriculture, stormwater discharges, wildlife that live in the corridor, high river flows, recreation and other factors. Pollutants such as elevated levels of fecal coliforms are more readily observed in the Elbow River due to its small size and low flow; therefore water quality frequently does not meet recreational water quality guidelines. The City of Calgary and Alberta Health Services work together to increase awareness about public health risks associated with wading or swimming in the river.

Sites for Future Consideration

Haskayne Park

A boat launch or marina is being considered for this future development site. However it is also important to give due consideration to water protection goals around the Bearspaw Reservoir. Recreational use of Bearspaw Reservoir should align with that of the Glenmore Reservoir, as per Glenmore Park Bylaw #9018, which prohibits swimming or human contact, motorized boats, and winter on-ice access. Calgary Parks will continue to work with partners to determine the best course of action for this site.

Bowmont

Results of a current study may indicate a possible hand launch location, if potential conflict with off-leash users can be mitigated.

Pumphouse Theatre

This site would be part of the larger West Village development, and should not be considered until clean up of the site, as well as bank protection work, has been completed.

Prince's Island West

This site located on the western point of Prince's Island near the foot bridge, could be an ideal hand launch due to calm waters. This area is part of the West Eau Claire redevelopment and a launch could be considered within that project.

Ogden River Right

North of the Lafarge plan, this site may be a good alternative if the proposed Ogden River Left becomes less than ideal.. Investigation of the widening of Glenmore Trail would be required before proceeding.

Quarry Park/Lafarge

At this time the developer owns this land and does not have interest in a public launch. Calgary Parks can work with the developer to determine if this site could be accessible in the future

Cranston

This land is currently owned by the developer, but could be investigated as a launch in the future, either with the developer or after the development is completed. However, currently this site appears to be a sensitive fish habitat, and should be avoided if studies indicate it is still an important spawning area. Further, if the Pine Creek site across the river is successful, this site may not be required.

Seton/72 Ave

Not currently owned by The City, this site could be considered in a future development.

Ralph Klein/Frenchman's

Land ownership is currently with the Province, but will have an intent to eventually transfer it to The City. At that time, it can be considered for a boat launch.

Wood's Park

This site has a building that could be used for washrooms and change rooms. However there is no parking nearby and therefore would need an addition of a parking lot. This site may not be required if other sites can accommodate users.



Sites Not Recommended

Baker Park

Originally considered for a hand launch to reduce users at Bowness Park, this site is booked entirely for weddings during the summer months, which would conflict with river users.

Parkdale

Lack of parking and traffic issues would need to be addressed before formalizing this hand launch.

Memorial Drive and 10 Street NW

It was felt that this site could generate user conflict with cyclists, pedestrians, and even vehicles as users attempt to cross Memorial Drive with a watercraft. As the Fire Hall is slated for a different use, it is expected that parking at this site would not be available.

Sien Lok Park

With no parking, a steep bank, and proximity to an environmentally sensitive area, this site was discounted as a potential hand launch. Nearby Centre Street launch was chosen as a better alternative.

Fort Calgary/Deane House

While these sites have been used as take out sites for users, there are a number of challenges including a potentially sensitive fish habitat, potential risk to disturb a historical site, lack of parking, and possible higher levels of fecal coliform

Nose Creek Confluence

Complications with land owned by CP Rail make this site challenging. Further the confluence may be a sensitive fish habitat that should be avoided.

Ogden Bridge

Ogden bridge (river right) directly south of the train tracks, originally appeared to be ideal with good access, slope, land ownership and more. However a large berm is currently being constructed here for flood mitigation. The current Ogden site on river left (by Refinery Park) is considered instead.

Bonnybrook Plant

While this site is successfully used by RiverWatch as a stopover for lunch, poor and restricted access makes it unsuitable for a launch site.

Glenmore Dam

This site was discounted due to security concerns, and importance of protecting The City's drinking water supply.

Elbow Towers, Elboya, 25 Ave

These sites were all considered and discounted due to lack of parking which could greatly impact neighbouring residents.

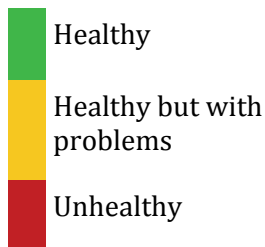


Priority 2: Environment

The River Access Strategy is closely aligned with the Riparian Strategy and Riparian Action Program, which has mapped sensitive sites and classified them.

These riparian areas have been considered when identifying potential access sites. When a site is in or close to a site that is “Unhealthy” or “Healthy but with problems”, measures should be taken to minimize impact and potentially even improve the habitat. Sites that are considered “Healthy” are avoided as introducing a new activity may jeopardize that classification.

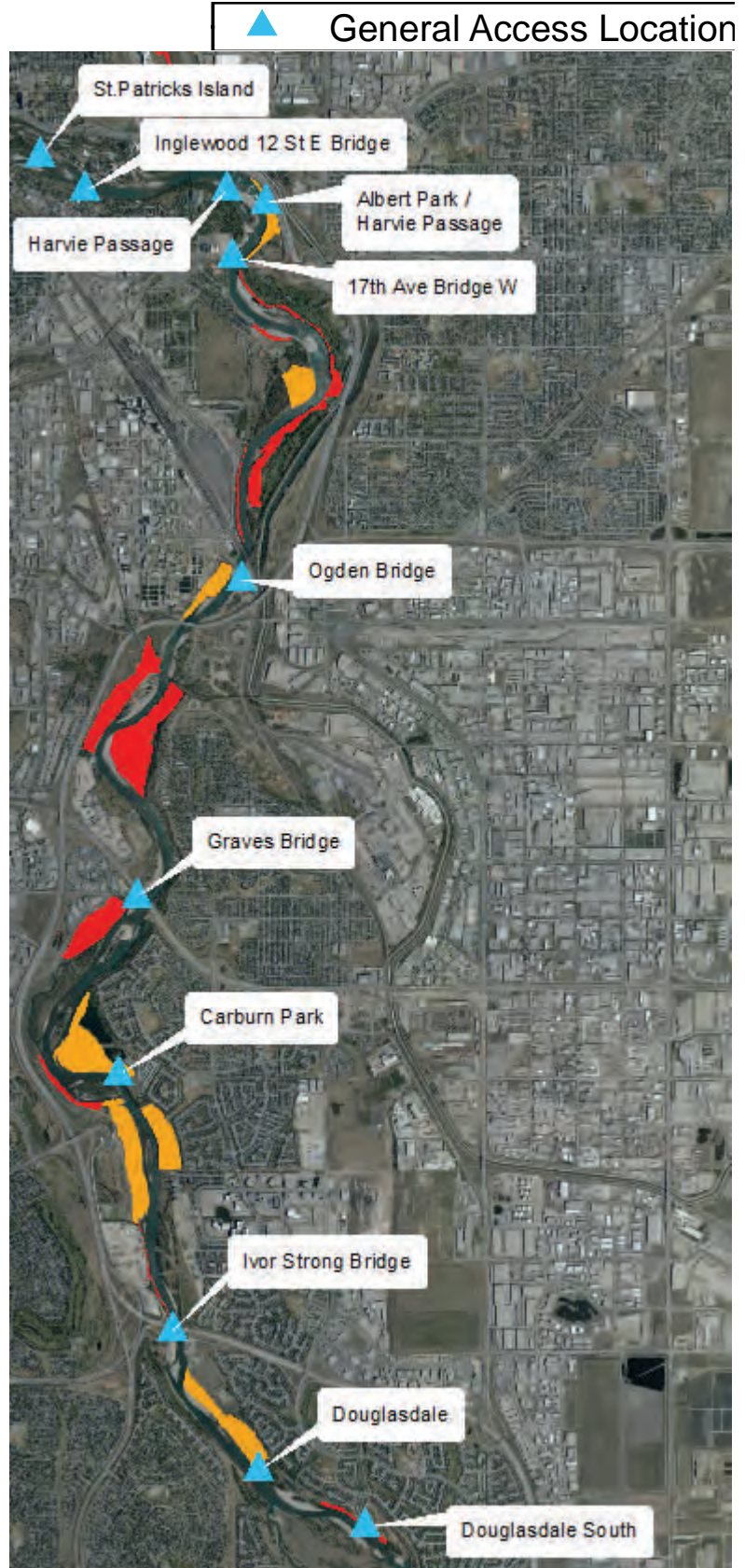
In addition, the recent 2015 Bow River Brown Trout Redd Survey conducted by Trout Unlimited



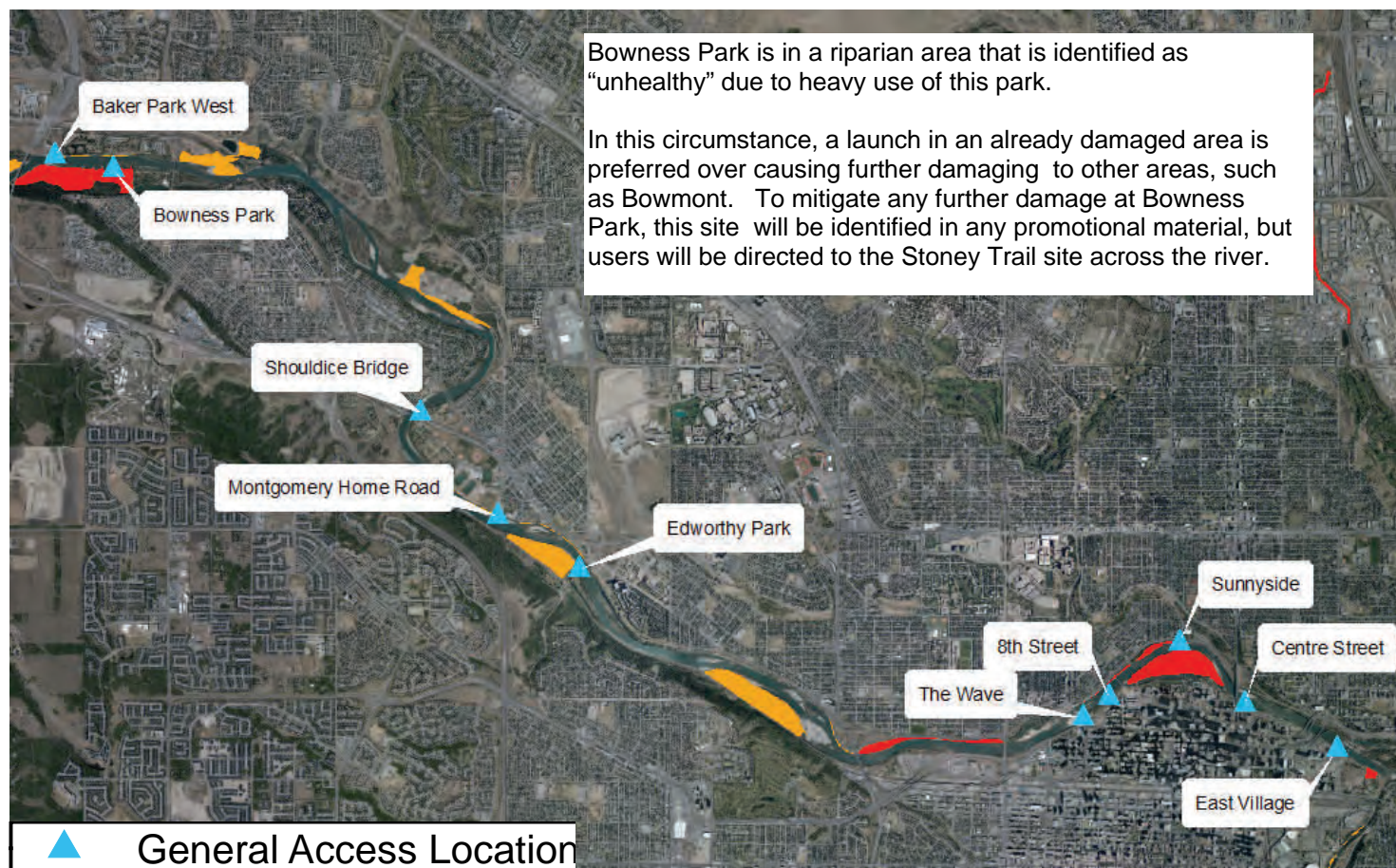
Bow River: St. Patrick's Island to Douglasdale

Prince's Island Park is located within a riparian area that is identified as Unhealthy, due to the current heavy use of the park. By creating a designated access point at Prince's Island that is carefully managed, it is expected that riparian damage can be mitigated, or possibly even contained at this park.

Carburn Park falls into a “Healthy but with problems” classification. This site was originally intended to be used as a boat ramp, however, due to the riparian sensitivity in conjunction with diverse bird populations, it was determined that this site should only be used as a hand launch. This will allow for controlled access, without increasing the use of the area.



Bow River: Baker Park West to East Village



Elbow River

Sandy Beach and Stanley Park are heavily used areas which have likely contributed to riparian habitats that are classified as “unhealthy”. By designating specific river access sites in these parks, and implementing education programs, riparian damage can be contained or mitigated.

Priority 3: Education

Website and App

Currently there is minimal information available on www.calgary.ca with regards to river access sites within Calgary, except for the Glenmore Reservoir sites. As most users are likely to first go to the internet, it is important to have a designated page on www.calgary.ca where users can find information on how to access the river, safety guidelines, current advisories or hazards, and tips for how to protect the environment.

To better provide current and relevant information, an app for mobile devices could be valuable. This would allow users to easily access information during their river trip. From a safety perspective, an app would allow push notifications to go out to users with warnings, such as a thunderstorm or hazards that have appeared in the river. Further investigation is needed to determine if this app could be incorporated into the existing Parks and Pathway app.

Programs

River Use Ambassador Program

Similar to the already successful Off Leash Ambassador Program, this program would provide training to volunteers on how to promote responsible river behaviour and act as positive role models on the river, utilizing education and promotion items to reinforce messages. There is an opportunity to work with not-for profit agencies and local businesses to develop and implement such a program. The program could also replicate components of successful wildlife education programs implemented by the Province in Kananaskis and other parks, or reinforce other programs such as "Leave No Trace". This program will be managed by Calgary Community Standards.

Events

Working with partners, Calgary Parks will continue to conduct river clean up and tree wiring/wrapping events that allow river users to directly contribute to the health of the rivers.

Riparian Action Program

To support the Riparian Strategy and subsequent Riparian Action Program, an education and outreach program will be implemented with the goals of telling a holistic story of living with the river, creating opportunities for Calgarians to connect with the river, and prioritizing and focusing engagement and education efforts. This program will be led by Water Resources, with a wide range of other agencies and groups as supporting partners in implementation.

Map

In addition to information on www.calgary.ca as well as an app, the Strategy recommends producing a printed copy of the river map. This map would be printed on water proof paper and be available in similar locations to the Calgary Parks and Pathways Map.

Public Art

Public engagement indicated interest in incorporating public art to promote an appreciation of the river. A capital cost has been included to support artist involvement in the implementation phase. Creating encounters and experiences through the lens of an artist can help renew citizens' relationships with our river areas. Embedding artists into the implementation process can support the priority of long term environmental stewardship and protection. This aligns with the Public Art Master Plan actions to respond to the needs of communities and provide opportunities that develop our artists and engage our citizens, facilitate art projects based on ideas, place and history (rather than limiting to infrastructure), and to place art in every quadrant to provide greatest impact for Calgarians.

Signage

Installation of signage was a common theme during the engagement process. At each river site, users want clear signage to include behavior bylaws, guidelines, a map and directional signage, warnings and cautions, amenity location, and any pertinent information about the river. While on the river, users require information on upcoming exits, safety hazards, areas to avoid, as well as an indication of when users are reaching City limits. Safety signage design should incorporate guidelines from the Canadian Dam Safety Association, which recommends effective signage to warn of river hazards.

Examples:



Priority 4: Economic Opportunities

By providing river access sites, this strategy will support local recreation and tourism sectors and ensure they continue to thrive.

Tourism Calgary indicates that sport tourism contributes over \$5.2 billion annually to the Canadian economy, and with enhanced sport infrastructure of all kinds, Calgary's economy will see significant increases from our ability to attract and host sport and event related visitors. For that reason, the upcoming Destination Strategy from Tourism Calgary calls out the need to enhance sport infrastructure of all kinds within our city.

Statistics Canada (2014) estimated visitor spending on various activities in Calgary and found that:

- \$85,319,700 (7.1%) was spent by overnight visitors to the Calgary metropolitan area on boating/canoeing/kayaking
- \$31,893,000 (2.6%) was spent by overnight visitors to the Calgary metropolitan area on fishing

Further, investigation by the Calgary River Users Alliance (CRUA) has indicated that river activities can add as much as \$50 million to the Calgary economy. To estimate the economic impact of fishing in Calgary and area, CRUA reviewed the Bow River Sport Fish Angler Survey in 2005, as well as the Alberta Environment and Parks Fisheries Management Sports Fishing in Alberta in 2010 and again in 2014. From these, CRUA extrapolated that the fishing community alone contributes more than \$24.5 million per year to the local economy. In addition, utilizing the 2013 Alberta Recreation Survey, CRUA estimates the addition of canoeing, kayaking, rafting and other sports could possibly even double this amount.

In addition, the strategy encourages the development of new 'river related' businesses. As river use becomes more common, it is possible for small businesses to offer shuttle services, equipment rental, teaching opportunities, food services, and more.

Recreation as an Economic Generator

In 2012, the average Canadian household spent \$3,773.00 on recreation, in comparison to \$7,739.00 on food.

In 2009, it is estimated that Canada's national, provincial and territorial parks created over 64,000 full time equivalent jobs resulting in \$2.9 billion dollars in labor income and a \$4.6-billion-dollar contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Anglers contributed a total of \$8.3 billion to various local economies in Canadian provinces and territories in 2010. Of this amount, \$5.8 billion was in the form of purchases of durable goods related to recreational fishing activities. The remaining \$2.5 billion covered direct expenditures during recreational fishing trips, such as transportation, food, lodging, fishing services and fishing supplies.

Recreation as an Economic Generator: excerpt from "The Need for a River Recreation Management Plan: A Supplement to Calgary River Users Alliance Economic Position Statement to The City of Calgary. Source: Pathways to Wellbeing a National Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2014. A joint initiative of the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association



Implementation Plan and Budget Estimates

Sites have been prioritized based on improving safety of users, protection of the riparian environment and accommodating heavy demand for park space or river sites.

Detailed Design
Approvals
Implementation

PRIORITY 1 SITES AND INITIATIVES

Implementation Plan

	2017 Q2	2017 Q3	2017 Q4	2018	2019
Inglewood Bridge (at 12 Street SE)					
Concrete or flexible ramp					
Plumbed in washroom design and parking					
Amenities					
Albert Pk/Harvie Passage (Deerfoot at 17 Av SE)					
Feasibility study					
Ogden Bridge (Ogden Rd under Deerfoot Tr SE)					
Installation concrete mat					
Amenities (garbage cans etc)					
Parking lot					
Sunnyside (Memorial Drive at 3 St NW)					
Timber stairs and garbage can					
Concrete mat					
West Baker Park (Scenic Bow Rd at Stoney Tr NW)					
Additional ramps, accessible fishing pier					
Parking lot					
Washroom					
Signage/Education Programs					
Signage and map					
Graves Bridge (Heritage Dr at Glenmore Tr SE)					
Installation of concrete lock blocks					

Capital Budget for 2017-2018—Class 5 Estimate

Funding		Expenditures	
Calgary Parks	\$425,000	Design and Regulatory Approvals	\$235,000
Infrastructure Calgary	\$990,000	Implementation and Construction	\$1,455,000
Calgary River Users Alliance	\$275,000		
TOTAL	\$1,690,000	TOTAL	\$1,690,000

Operating Budget Estimate

It is estimated that Calgary Parks will have approximately \$185,000 in operating costs annually after Priority Sites have been constructed.

PRIORITY 2 SITES AND INITIATIVES				
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Remaining work Priority 1 Sites				
12 Street Boat Launch washroom				
Sunnyside concrete mat				
West Baker Park washroom				
17 Ave Bridge (West) and Harvie Passage				
Additional ramp				
Washroom and widen road by Sobow development				
Temporary structure change room for kayakers				
Seton/72 Ave Boat ramp				
Work with Province to determine potential partnership				
Ramp, parking, washroom, amenities				
Shouldice Park Boat ramp				
Additional tied concrete mat (temporary solution)				
Long term public boat ramp, parking, amenities				
Douglasdale and Pine Creek Boat Ramps				
Install concrete mat and gravel access road				
Amenities				
Hand Launch Sites Minor Improvements				
Glenmore Park parking lot				
Montgomery hand launch bank upgrades				
10 Street Wave tied concrete mat				
Education				
River Ambassador Program, App development, Public Art				
Capital Budget—Class 5 Estimate		Operating Budget Estimate		
Funding Currently unfunded. To be determined through the 2019-2022 Action Plan process.		Expenditures \$5,970,000		it is expected approximately \$315,000 in additional operating costs annually will be incurred after Priority 2 Sites have been constructed.

MINOR IMPROVEMENTS AND LOW COST INITIATIVES			
	2016	2017	2018
Ensure existing sites have appropriate amenities (ie: Stoney Trail, Bowness, Edworthy, St Patrick's Island, Carburn Park, Graves Bridge, Sandy Beach, Sandy Beach North, Stanley Park, Glenmore Reservoir)			
Ensure new sites have appropriate amenities (ie: Centre Street, East Village, Ivor Strong McDonald Bridge)			
Promotion and Education, Partnership Programs			
Post information on www.calgary.ca			
Design and implement partnership program with river user groups			
Capital and Operating Budgets			
These capital and operating costs have or will be absorbed within existing Calgary Parks budgets.			



City of Calgary River Use Access Strategy

FEBRUARY 2017