

PLACE MATTERS: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RECOMMENDATIONS AND TOOLKITS

vivo™



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE PLACE MATTERS PROJECT

Vivo for Healthier Generations and Parks Foundation received \$100,000 in funding from the Council Innovation Fund in 2021 for the project *A Strategy Model for Grass Roots Park Space Development in North Central Calgary*, herein referred to as *Place Matters*. The objective of the project was to engage North Calgary community members in the development of a strategy model for grassroots park development and to identify priorities for outdoor public space projects. Report contents include a summary of community engagement methods and insights, recommendations to support Calgary's outdoor public spaces, priorities for future outdoor public space projects in North Calgary, and community toolkits to support future community engagement and outdoor public space project development.



THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The project team carried out a series of community engagement activities to solicit input from North Calgary community members, organizations, and subject matter experts. Feedback from these activities served as the principal data source to inform the development of project deliverables. Engagement activities included:

1. **Values and Needs Event:** A community event October 15, 2022, with ~275 attendees providing feedback on values and needs associated with outdoor public spaces.
2. **Subject Matter Expert Interviews:** Interviews between March 3 - April 19, 2023, with 13 subject matter experts exploring the process of developing and activating outdoor public spaces.
3. **Capital Projects Survey:** An online survey available between March 1 - April 5, 2023, with responses from 25 community organizations contributing to an initial list of projects for North Calgary communities.
4. **Prioritization Event:** A community event June 17, 2023, with ~250 attendees providing feedback on priorities and preferences for outdoor public space projects in North Calgary.



CALGARY'S OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

Community member feedback in all four engagement activities provided insights that are applicable beyond prioritizing North Calgary's outdoor public spaces. This section of the report provides information that can complement strategic planning and management of Calgary's outdoor public spaces. This includes:

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Key roles and responsibilities involved in developing, activating, and maintaining Calgary's outdoor public spaces.
- **Community Needs and Values:** Community needs and values to inform future outdoor public space projects.
- **Challenges for Outdoor Public Space:** Challenges that should be considered as part of planning for a future of sustainable and community-driven outdoor public spaces, along with recommendations to address those challenges.
- **Supporting Grassroots Initiatives:** Recommendations to address the barriers encountered by community advocates involved in outdoor public spaces. Barriers include: Partnership and Collaboration, Funding, Processes Navigation, Agency, and Maintenance and Activation.



NORTH CALGARY PRIORITIES

Priorities for North Calgary outdoor public space projects were developed based on feedback from community members and organizations who participated in the Capital Projects Survey and the Prioritization Event. North Calgary community organizations identified 13 projects which serve as a starting project for additional community engagement and prioritization. Community members informed the development of a prioritization framework including outdoor public space types and activities, characteristics, and purposes. The most common themes associated with community member priorities included:

- **Nature:** Spaces should provide a connection to nature and incorporate natural elements.
- **Play:** Spaces should provide opportunities for children to play, exercise, and grow.
- **Social Connection:** Spaces should provide opportunities to connect with other community members.
- **Multi-Purpose:** Spaces should incorporate infrastructure and amenities that can be used for a variety of activities.
- **Convenience:** Space should be close and/or easily accessible to as many community members as possible.
- **Equity and Inclusivity:** Spaces should be usable by all members of a community.
- **Health Promotion:** Spaces should be built to promote physical and mental health.

NEXT STEPS

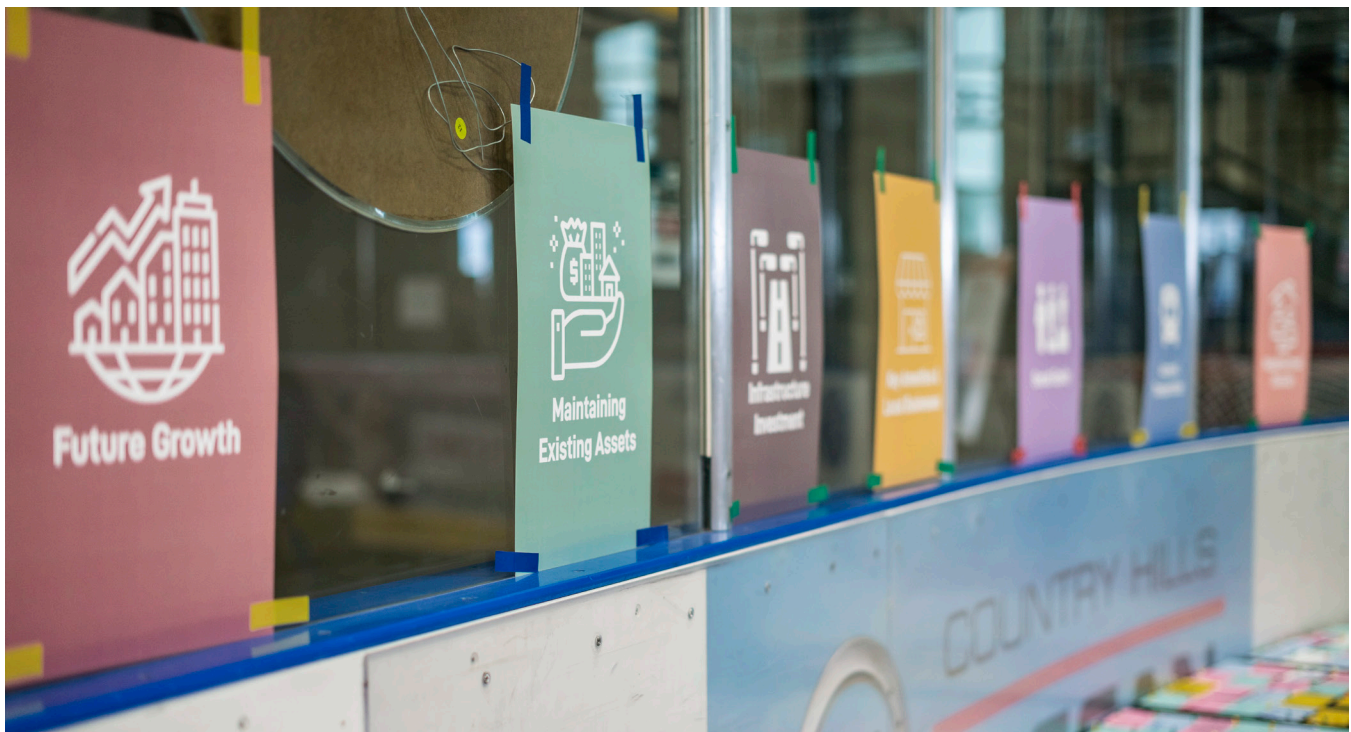
This project provides a list of community-driven projects and priorities which serve as a starting point for future North Calgary outdoor public space projects. Additional community engagement and review of existing asset distributions is recommended to ensure that projects meet the needs of the communities they are proposed for; this will require funding and the support of partner organizations (e.g., Parks Foundation) to coordinate and execute. In addition to projects for North Calgary, a series of opportunities to enhance Calgary's outdoor public spaces generally are presented. These opportunities can be collectively addressed through additional investment in outdoor public space systems and initiatives aimed at optimizing existing processes and service delivery models.

COMMUNITY TOOLKITS

Two toolkits are provided as appendices to the report. These toolkits are designed for community members interested in community engagement and outdoor public space development.

The Community Engagement Toolkit provides a series of recommendations and lessons learned based on the project team's experience with the community engagement activities conducted as part of Place Matters. The toolkit is intended to serve as a resource for individuals and organizations interested in conducting future community engagement initiatives.

The Community Advocate Toolkit is a resource to support community advocates involved in leading their own outdoor public space projects. It presents seven key activities, each accompanied by a description of the activity's purpose, recommendations to complete the activity, common challenges associated with that activity, key partners to engage in the activity and links to additional activity resources.



INTRODUCTION

A Strategy Model for Grass Roots Park Space Development in North Central Calgary, now titled Place Matters, was a collaborative pilot project led by Parks Foundation and Vivo for Healthier Generations. The project was funded through The City's Council Innovation Fund and explored opportunities to re-imagine the creation and activation of outdoor public spaces through community advocacy. It also focused on defining priorities and preferences for outdoor public spaces within North Calgary communities, with the aim of building a stronger sense of belonging through innovative outdoor public space development.

Over the course of the project, community members and audiences of interest from across North Calgary were engaged to define and develop community-centric processes and resources that would support the creation and maintenance of active, connected, naturalized and sustainable outdoor public spaces across existing and new communities. This report summarizes their feedback through recommendations and considerations for Calgary's outdoor public spaces generally and North Calgary's outdoor public spaces specifically.

The mission of Parks Foundation is to ensure Calgarians can enjoy a healthy lifestyle by providing easily accessible and unique outdoor public spaces. Vivo is a charity with a profound purpose; to ignite a mindset to LIVE for healthier generations. Vivo's collaboratory applies leading practices in social innovation to co-create and measure new kinds of healthy living solutions, and their Centre is an inclusive environment for healthy lifestyles. Together, they create meaningful impact with individuals, our community, and the planet.



WHAT ARE OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES?

In the context of this report, outdoor public spaces are freely accessible community spaces which contain managed infrastructure that afford opportunities for citizen activities and experiences. Freely accessible necessitates that these spaces are available to any individual with no restrictions to access based on memberships or affiliations. Managed infrastructure refers to the fact that these spaces have either built or natural features which require management in their planning, design, construction, use and/or maintenance. Often considered parks, outdoor public spaces can vary in their design and also include public art installations, community gardens, athletic fields or event/gathering spaces.

Outdoor public spaces can provide areas for sport and play; they can beautify and enrich communities; and they can relax and sustain the individuals that use them. Effectively designed public spaces are instrumental in promoting the physical, social, mental, and environmental well-being of individuals and communities. When an outdoor public space project is successfully realized, there are diverse impacts throughout a community: businesses make use of the space to prosper, artists are able to promote their art, people feel a sense of safety and inclusion, opportunities for connection with neighbours and nature are facilitated, and communities are given access to environments that enable social and physical activity.



TYPES OF OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

Outdoor public spaces, in the context of this project, include:

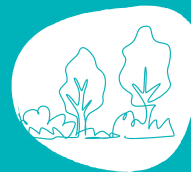


Sports and Activity Spaces

Spaces that allow for structured or unstructured physical activity and sport(s).

Social Gathering Space

Spaces that facilitate socialization and community events.



Nature Based Spaces

Spaces that enable community connection to natural environments.

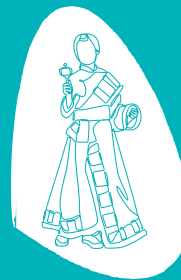
Play Spaces

Spaces that provide infrastructure for children to play. Inclusive playgrounds refer to a style of playground designed to be accessible to all children regardless of their abilities.



Public Art Spaces

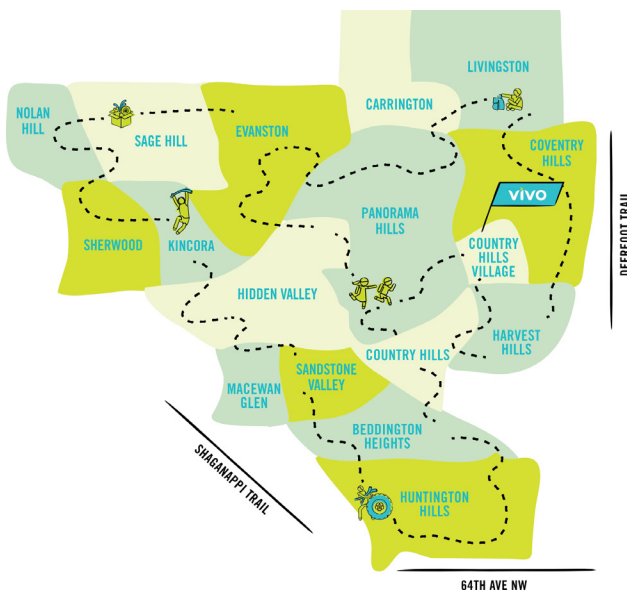
Spaces that allow for the demonstration of artistic or cultural creations, including static art installations such as statues and murals, musical and/or visual performances, or even kinetic (moving) artwork installations.



NORTH CALGARY COMMUNITIES

North Calgary is a collection of 17 communities to the west of Deerfoot Trail NE, North of 64th Ave NE, and east of Shaganappi Trail NE (see Figure 1) and is comprised of a young, diverse, and growing population. This project was funded with an emphasis on understanding how to enhance outdoor public spaces in North Calgary through community consultation and engagement.

Figure 1. North Calgary Communities



THE NEED FOR OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES IN NORTH CALGARY

A review of public data provided via the [Calgary Equity Index Tool](#) and [The City of Calgary Parks Wayfinder](#) provides additional context on the need for enhanced outdoor public space development in North Calgary communities.¹

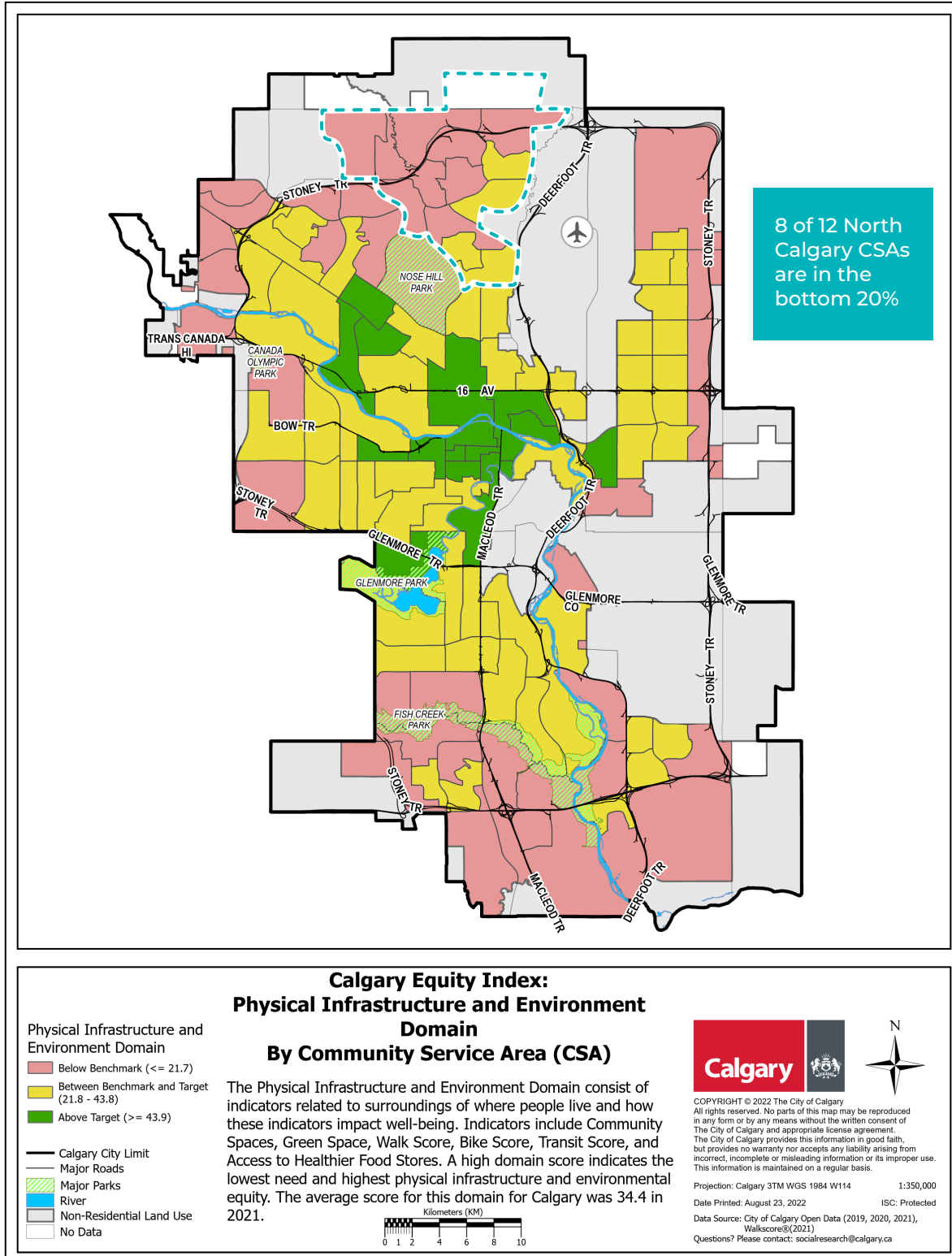
Equity Indices – Physical Infrastructure and Environment

The City of Calgary provides the Calgary Equity Index as “a tool to help residents, planners, researchers, and decision-makers identify disparities or equity concerns across Calgary”.² Of the CEI data available, The Physical Infrastructure and Environment Domain is likely the most relevant when evaluating the relative need for outdoor public space development. The domain is a composite index which includes Access to Community Spaces, Access to Green Spaces, Walk Score, Bike Score, Transit Score, and Access to Healthy Food Stores.

Figure 2 presents Physical Infrastructure and Environment Domain scores across all 113 Community Service Areas (CSAs). The North Calgary communities of interest in this project are represented within 12 CSAs outlined on the map.³ The project team observed that 8 of 12 North Calgary CSAs are at or below the benchmark, indicating they are in the bottom 20% of Calgary’s CSAs. This is a high-level indicator of the opportunity for enhanced community infrastructure, including outdoor public spaces, in North Calgary communities relative to many other areas of the city.

- 1 The project team’s review of City provided data may not align with Calgary Parks & Open Spaces or City of Calgary standards and methodologies.
- 2 City of Calgary, Calgary Equity Index. Retrieved: August 28, 2023.
- 3 2.1 (Nolan Hill, Sherwood, Sage Hill); 3.1 (Hidden Valley); 4.1 (Evanston, Kincora); 5.1 (Panorama Hills); 6.1 (Panorama Hills); 15.1 (Hidden Valley, MacEwan Glen); 16.1 (Sandstone Valley, Beddington Heights); 17.1 (Huntington Hills, Beddington Heights); 33.2 (Coventry Hills); 35.2 (Coventry Hills, Country Hills Village); 36.2 (Harvest Hills, Panorama Hills); 37.2 (Huntington Hills).

Figure 2. Physical Infrastructure and Environment Domain Map



EXISTING ASSET DISTRIBUTIONS

A review of outdoor public space assets within North Calgary communities was conducted using a combination of [The City of Calgary Parks Wayfinder](#) data and Google Maps; these assets may change over time, however the data is current at the time of writing this report. A per capita rating was computed by dividing community population (based on Statistics Canada data from 2021) by the number of identified amenities. This data is presented in tabular form in Table 1 and serves as an indicator of the relative need for additional outdoor public space infrastructure between North Calgary communities. The following observations are provided by the project team for consideration:



Soccer Fields and Baseball Diamonds

Soccer Fields and baseball diamonds are a relatively standard community amenity; however they are often used by people outside of the community (e.g., fields booked by organizations outside of the community may become unavailable to community residents). Review of existing asset distributions indicates that Panorama Hills, Carrington, and Sage Hill are areas of greatest need for additional soccer fields and baseball diamonds in North Calgary.

Sport Courts

Sport courts are one of the most desired community amenities by residents. Review of existing asset distributions indicates that Nolan Hill, Kincora, Evanston, MacEwan Glen, Sandstone Valley, Country Hills, Country Hills Village and Livingston are areas of greatest need for additional sport courts in North Calgary.

Large Playgrounds

Larger “destination” playgrounds facilitate greater community gathering, inclusion, and diversity in parks. Review of existing asset distributions indicate Country Hills, Beddington Heights, Kincora, and Nolan Hill are the areas of greatest need for large playgrounds in North Calgary.

Unique Amenities

Unique amenities include artificial turf fields, bicycle pump tracks, skate parks, disc golf courses, tennis courts, parkour / climbing parks, outdoor event spaces, plaza spaces, four- season spaces, natural playgrounds, pollination corridors, art features in parks, inclusive playgrounds, and off-leash dog parks. It appears there are relatively few of these amenities in North Calgary, with Nolan Hill, Sherwood, Panorama Hills, Country Hills and Livingston appearing to be areas of greatest need.

Table 1. North Calgary Community Assets Per Capita

Interpreting the Table: Cell values reflect assets per capita and cell shading represents percentiles across the 17 communities. For example, Carrington has 1 Basketball / Multi-Use Sport Court per 827 residents, and is in the top 20% of North Calgary communities with respect to per capita access to that particular community asset. Cells with “-” indicate there are no assets of that type within a community.

COMMUNITY (POPULATION)	Basketball / Multi-Use Sport Court	Soccer Fields & Baseball Diamonds	Tennis / Pickleball Courts	Small Playground	Large Playground	Off-Leash Dog Parks	Unique Amenities
Beddington Heights (12,131)	12,131	867	-	674	12,131	2,426	2,022
Carrington (1,653)	827	-	-	-	551	-	827
Country Hills (4,195)	-	1,398	-	839	-	-	-
Country Hills Village (3,341)	-	1,671	-	-	3,341	-	1,114
Coventry Hills (18,756)	2,679	1,563	-	2,345	2,345	-	6,252
Evanston (17,243)	17,243	1,326	-	2,874	2,463	17,243	5,748
Harvest Hills (8,337)	2,779	2,084	8,337	2,084	2,779	8,337	1,667
Hidden Valley (12,531)	12,531	1,139	12,531	1,392	1,790	6,266	3,133
Huntington Hills (14,571)	2,914	470	7,286	694	2,429	2,914	1,457
Kincora (7,876)	-	1,969	-	1,313	-	-	7,876
Livingston (956)	-	478	-	478	956	-	-
MacEwan Glen (5,229)	-	1,743	5,229	1,046	5,229	-	5,229
Nolan Hill (6,183)	-	1,237	-	1,237	-	-	-
Panorama Hills (27,859)	5,572	2,533	-	2,786	3,095	-	13,930
Sage Hill (8,083)	8,083	2,694	-	1,617	2,694	-	8,083
Sandstone Valley (6,525)	-	1,088	6,525	1,305	3,263	2,175	1,088
Sherwood (5,290)	5,290	1,323	-	2,645	2,645	-	-
TOTAL (160,759)	5,945	1,256	26,793	1,448	2,977	40,190	3,420

LEGEND

Bottom 20%

Middle 60%

Top 20%

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



THE PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

This project engaged community members and organizations to develop a better understanding of processes and priorities for outdoor public spaces in North Calgary. Engagement activities provided a mix of qualitative and quantitative data from a diverse set of interested parties which was analyzed by the project team to generate the recommendations and insights presented throughout this report. The following section provides details on the community engagement methods and tools utilized throughout the project. Lessons learned and recommendations for future community engagement initiatives are summarized within the Community Engagement Toolkit provided as an appendix to this report.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The project team's general approach to planning community engagement activities consists of five key aspects:

1. **Understand the Community:** The engagement process must clearly define who should be engaged and how they can be meaningfully connected with. Consideration must be given to who in the community is missing in an engagement activity so the organizers can be deliberate about attempts to create inclusive engagement strategies.
2. **Define Motivations:** The community engagement activity must be framed in a way that will be seen as valuable enough to community members to warrant their investment of time and effort in participation. Defining and validating the value that engagement has for community members is critical for it to be successful.
3. **Facilitate Collaboration and Co-Creation:** Community members may have competing interests which need to be considered and potentially moderated during engagement activities. Co-creation requires authenticity, transparency, and trust; various perspectives should be framed in terms of opportunities

for effective collaboration through the incorporation of diverse perspectives. Community organizations and The City can act as trusted partners to bring community members together, but they are not always required in the early phases of a grassroots initiative.

4. **Leverage Data:** A community engagement activity serves as an opportunity to capture data which can be transformed into insight. When planning an engagement activity, consideration should be given for how data will be collected, analyzed, used, and shared back with the community. This can be as simple as head counts to measure attendance as an indication of engagement, or more complex through research activities incorporating interviews and surveys.
5. **Create a Plan:** A successful community engagement initiative is a project in and of itself, which requires coordination and leadership. The initiative may require approvals and permissions, risk and liability management, funding and volunteer support, and will certainly require communication and relationship management across multiple partner organizations and groups. Consideration should be given to how the initiative will be planned and managed from start to finish to increase the chance it will be productive and successful.



PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The following principles (Table 2) were used to guide the project team’s approach to community engagement throughout all phases of the project and each of the engagement activities.

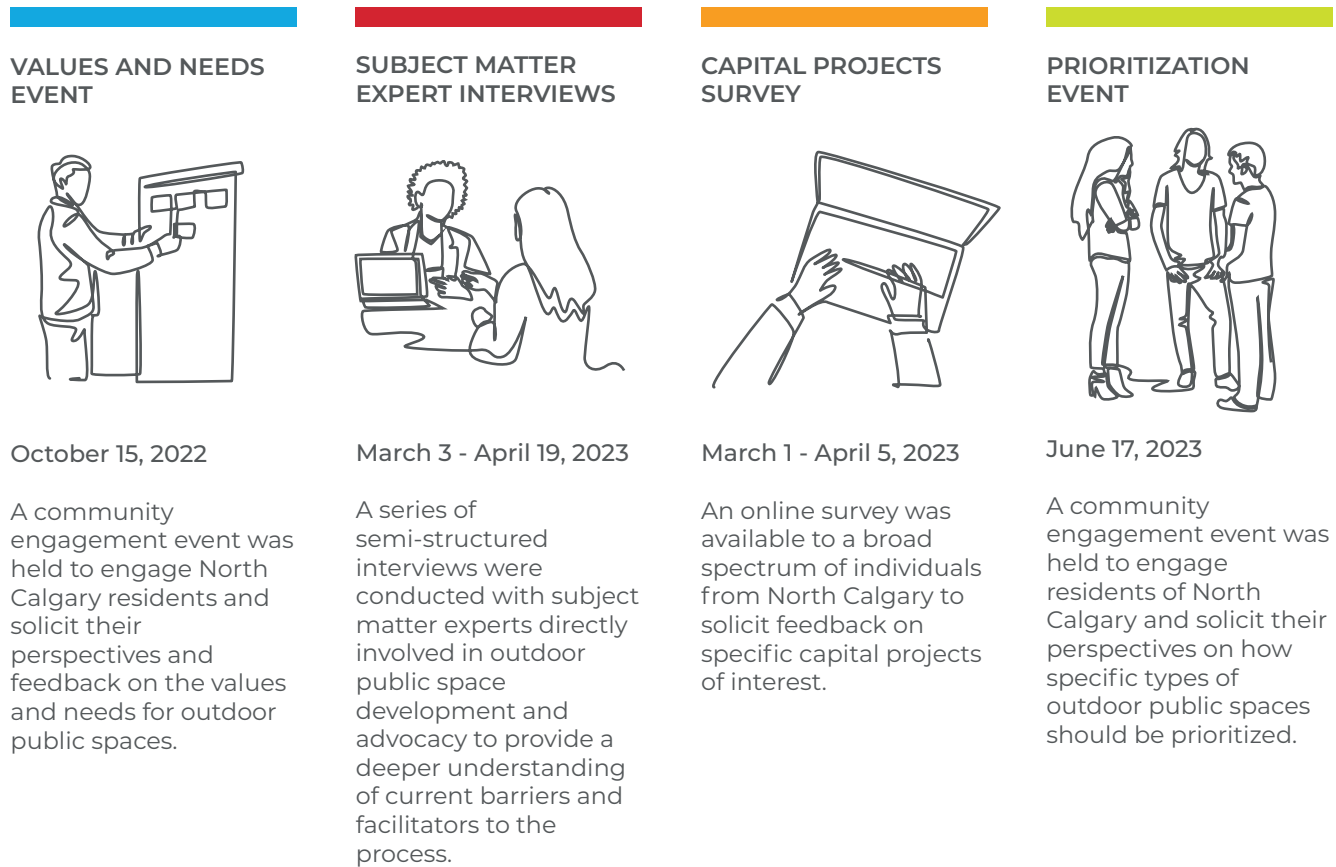
Table 2. Principles of Engagement

PRINCIPLE	PURPOSE	PROJECT INTEGRATION
Place-based	Ground engagement activities and conversations in the places people live and are connected to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land acknowledgments • Explore relations with land and built space • Discuss community locations
Co-Creation	Allow and empower the individuals participating in the project to shape the process and results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage community in conversations to shape the strategy model and prioritized projects • Partner in the design and facilitation of engagement activities
Reciprocity	Give back to the individuals who participate in meaningful ways to demonstrate appreciation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give back through food, networking, information sharing • Reach back to share and validate insights
Inclusive Representation	Ensure engagement activities are accessible to all individuals within the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to businesses, community members, organizations, churches, schools • Provide opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous engagement • Reduce barriers to participation
Create Relationships	Sustain relationships with the individuals engaged in the project to the extent they are willing to remain engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster long-lasting relationships and shared accountability • Provide opportunities for individuals to be engaged at multiple points in time • Identify opportunities for reciprocity and giving back
Emergence and Iteration	Adopt a mindset of flexibility and responsiveness that allows the project to evolve in response to successes and lessons learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate developmental evaluation methods • Reflect on learnings to identify refinement along the way • Create opportunities to listen and respond to partners and collaborators
Abundance	Celebrate the assets and opportunities that are available with a focus on opportunity and solution generation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify team and community strengths and assets • Drive conversations towards solution not problems • Adopt a mindset of gratitude and appreciation

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This project involved four distinct phases of community engagement (see Figure 3). Individuals involved in these engagement activities represented a broad spectrum of residents, community groups, businesses, and City officials and employees, primarily from North Calgary.

Figure 3. Community Engagement Activities





Values and Needs Event

Vivo and Parks Foundation partnered with three key community mobilizers to plan a half-day event that took place at Vivo on October 15, 2022. The event engaged approximately 275 community members, including business owners, community activators, and residents of North Calgary (see Table 3). The event focused on defining the value North Calgary community members see in outdoor public spaces, and the needs they have that these spaces serve (see Table 4). A group of students from Mount Royal University summarized event findings in a

visual process map as part of a graphic facilitation exercise during the event (see Figure 4).

The event provided feedback to inform the Community Needs and Values presented in Calgary's Outdoor Public Spaces, built relationships with key actors involved in North Calgary outdoor public space development projects, and provided context to develop subsequent engagement activities.

Table 3. Values and Needs Event Participation

ATTRIBUTE	OBSERVATIONS
Community Representation	The primary communities represented at the event were Panorama Hills (22%) and Country hills (10%). Other communities represented included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coventry Hills: 6.8% • Beddington Heights: 5.1% • Evanston: 5.1% • Harvest Hills: 5.1% • Huntington Hills: 5.1% • Other*: 41%
Ethno-Cultural Groups	The primary ethno-cultural groups among registrants were Chinese (37.9%) and Caucasian (24.1%).
Age	The primary age range represented at the event was 30-49 years old (70.7%), however many children were in attendance who were not registered attendees.
Gender	Of registered participants who indicated their gender, the primary identification was female (76.8%).
Business Representation	Of the individuals who participated in the prosperous communities bus tour, most were local business owners (47.1%) or staff (23.5%).

* Other Communities include Hidden Valley, MacEwan Glen, Sherwood, Carrington, Kincora, and Livingston.

Table 4. Values and Needs Event Activities

ENGAGED GROUPS	ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY
<p>Business Owners: Business owners are members of the communities that they operate in, and can provide resources, volunteers, and other contributions to activating outdoor public spaces. They see the benefits of having nearby spaces that attract community members but are generally underrepresented in community building conversations.</p>	<p>➔ Bus Tour: 17 individuals participated in a bus tour that included three business development site tours with a 30-minute facilitated group discussions.</p>
<p>Community Members: Community members are the current and intended users of outdoor public spaces. They have insider knowledge of what a community's current assets are, how they are used, and what gaps or needs could be filled by additional development or activation activities.</p>	<p>➔ General Event: Approximately 275 individuals participated in the general event where they interacted with engagement boards to provide their perspectives around outdoor public space needs and values, with a subset participating in 1:1 video storytelling of belonging in public spaces.</p>
<p>Community Advocates: Advocates are individuals or groups who have lived experience with community development and activation, generally on a volunteer basis. This experience lends an invaluable perspective into what works and what doesn't when it comes to developing and activating outdoor public spaces. These participants may also be potential partners, activators, and stewards of the process moving forward, or may provide connections to other individuals or organizations in their networks.</p>	<p>➔ Bus Tour: 40 individuals participated in a bus tour that included three community asset site tours with three 10-minute facilitated discussions.</p>

Figure 4. MRU Values and Needs Event Summary



This visual map is North Calgary's Story. It represents the values and needs community members said were important in creating a strong sense of belonging. It reflects the community's hopes for a future of outdoor public spaces to work and play in, that create a sense of inclusion and connection, and that contribute to prosperity and joy within communities.



Subject Matter Expert Interviews

The project team organized thirteen semi-structured interviews between March 3rd, 2023 – April 19th, 2023, with individuals involved in the development and management of outdoor public spaces in North Calgary. These individuals included developers and small business owners, City officials and employees, leaders of community and residents' associations, local artists, and community advocates.

The interviews focused on discussing the processes surrounding outdoor public spaces in Calgary, including barriers and facilitators to developing, activating, and maintaining them, the roles and responsibilities involved, resources and organizations that support the process and key insights from individuals familiar with the process (see Table 5).

Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were recorded and analyzed by the project team. The interviews served as the primary source of information to develop The Community Advocate Toolkit presented as an appendix to this report. They also informed the project team's understanding of Challenges for Outdoor Public Spaces and opportunities for Supporting Grassroots Initiatives.



Table 5. Interview Guide Topics

TOPIC	FOCUS
Introduction	Introduce the project, the team and the interview approach. Ask the interviewee to relate their perspective and experience as it pertains to the project.
Mapping the Process	<p>Explore the process of developing an outdoor public space step-by-step as the interviewee experiences it. Prompts to better understand each step include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you trying to accomplish and why • Who are the people or groups you interact with • What are the necessary inputs and outputs of this step • What 'things' do you interact with (e.g., tools and technology, policies and processes, documents)
Barriers and Facilitators	<p>Elaborate on barriers and facilitators when developing an outdoor public space at each step, prompts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources: Money, Space, Time • Knowledge, Skills and Abilities: Training & Education, Experience • People: Staff, Networks, Public • Tools: Technology, Software/Hardware • Geography: Place and Distance • Process: Forms / Documents, Policies and Guidelines
Improvement Opportunities	Explore the highs and lows of this the process overall and consider what the most important things to get right are.
Overall Experience	Discuss the overall experience of developing a space through an example of a successful or a challenging project.
Engagement and Collaboration in the Process	Discuss the partners and organizations involved in a project, the best way to engage them and how to manage conflicting priorities or processes.
Closing	Discuss the top three things that would make the process of activating a public space better.



Capital Projects Survey

An online survey was distributed to a sample of 118 North Calgary community organizations and advocates and available between March 1st – April 5th, 2023. The sample included community associations (n = 37), schools (n = 39), cultural centers / organizations (n = 10), seniors' groups (n = 7), religious organizations (n = 11), sports organizations (n = 8), developers (n = 2) and community advocates (n = 4). Respondents were incentivized to respond with the opportunity to win \$500 of free room rental time at VIVO with coffee and snacks for up to 20 people and project advisory services from Parks Foundation, including up to 4 hours of free grant editing/writing services. After three weeks, 25 organizations had provided responses (i.e., a 21% response rate).

The survey asked respondents to describe the outdoor public space projects they had planned or were aware of, future projects that they wished to see, and any barriers they experienced in relation to project execution (see Table 6). The 25 responses serve as the basis of the Community Project List presented in North Calgary Priorities.



Table 6. Capital Projects Survey Questions

QUESTION

1. Are there any outdoor capital projects in North Central Calgary (please see map below) that your organization has in progress? Outdoor projects include permanent infrastructure changes, such as sport courts, gathering spaces, playgrounds, park spaces, etc. If so, please provide a quick summary including the location, project details, and contact information?
2. Are there any outdoor capital projects in North Central Calgary (please see map below) that your organization has planned, or would like to see in the future? If so, please provide a quick summary.
3. What type of project or outdoor amenity do you feel would offer the most value and/or is most needed in your community? Please explain.
4. Have there been any roadblocks faced as your organization proceeds through the development of a project or when pursuing a new project idea?
5. Is there any additional information that you would like to share?



Prioritization Event

Vivo and Parks Foundation partnered with the MPC Foundation, Northern Hills Community Association, and HIVE developments to host a full day event at Vivo on June 17, 2023, as part of Calgary's Neighbour Day. The event engaged approximately 250 community members from across North Calgary (see Table 7). Most attendees participated in a series of activities designed to solicit feedback on priorities for the development of outdoor public spaces in North Calgary (see Table 8).



Table 7. Prioritization Event Participation

ATTRIBUTE	OBSERVATIONS
Community Representation (n = 139)	The primary communities represented among registered attendees at the event were Panorama Hills (26%) and Coventry Hills (16%). Other communities represented included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evanston: 7.2% • Livingston: 5.8% • Sherwood: 5.0% • Other*: 40%
Ethno-Cultural Groups (n=104)	The primary ethno-cultural groups among registrants (n=104) were Canadian (13%), Asian (12%), and South Asian (10%). An additional 13 cultural groups were represented at the event.
Age (n = 31)	The primary age range represented at the event was 26-45 years old (61%), however many children were in attendance who were not registered attendees.
Gender (n = 31)	The primary gender identification was female (39%), however 42% of individuals did not indicate gender.
Community Association Affiliation (n = 35)	Registrants were roughly split with regards to whether they were members of their community association (43%) or not (57%).

* Other communities included: Huntington Hills, Country Hills Village, Country Hills, Harvest Hills, Sandstone Valley, Cornerstone, Cityscape, Whitehorn, and Varsity.

** The demographic data provided comes from attendees who had pre-registered (n=139), however roughly half of the attendees were walk-ins (n=135) who did not provide demographic data; these individuals and their demographic information may be under-represented.

Table 8. Prioritization Event Stations

Introductory Station



PURPOSE: Orient community members to the process of providing feedback.

DESCRIPTION: Participants were instructed on how to navigate the stations to provide their feedback to the prompts each station provided.

Station 1a



PURPOSE: Gather data on participant's preferred outdoor public spaces in the area and inform them of the various types of spaces that exist.

DESCRIPTION: Participants viewed a large map of North Calgary with a series of parks listed, then asked to write down their favorite park's name and a reason for their choice. These reasons were then hung on a series of rope lines using clothes pins

Station 1b



PURPOSE: To have participants rank order factors that they see as important in outdoor public spaces.

DESCRIPTION: Participants used numbered stickers (1-6) to rank order the following outdoor public space attributes provided listed on a sandwich board sign:

- Social gathering
- Connection to nature
- Spontaneous play
- Sport and structured activities
- Informal learning space
- Mental wellness

Station 2

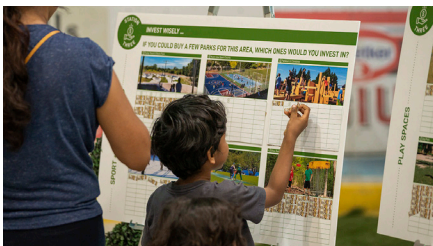


PURPOSE: To have participants rate specific values identified in the Phase 1 event with respect to outdoor public spaces.

DESCRIPTION: Participants were given beads and asked to place them in an interactive 5-point Likert scale comprised of buckets and tape on the floor. Participants provided their rating by placing their beads in the corresponding bucket for the following categories:

1. How much do you care about keeping and making natural things better in your community?
2. How much do you think it's important to use plants and natural things from your area to help make your community better for the environment?
3. How much do you think it's important for parks to be made in a way that everyone, no matter their abilities, can use and enjoy them?
4. How much do you think it's important for parks to have areas where people from different backgrounds can meet and spend time together?
5. How much do you think it's important for parks to have things that let people of all incomes use and enjoy outdoor spaces?

Station 3



PURPOSE: To have participants choose their most-desired park types, based on a list drawn from data of previous phases of Place Matters.

DESCRIPTION: Participants were given five stickers representing 100 dollars each and asked to allocate those stickers as symbolic investment in the types of parks they would like to see. Labelled photos of 28 types of parks being considered were provided on sandwich boards for stickers to be placed on.

Station 4



PURPOSE: To encourage attendees to communicate their reasoning behind their choices in Station 3 in the context of Council priorities.

DESCRIPTION: Participants were asked to write down why they invested their dollars the way they did in Station 3 on cue cards, and place those notes under a corresponding board reflecting potential Council priorities.

CALGARY'S OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES



INTRODUCTION

This section of the report provides information to complement civic initiatives aimed at improving the policies and processes that serve as a foundation for outdoor public space projects in Calgary. Topics discussed provide insights to consider when planning for the future of Calgary’s outdoor public spaces and include: a list of the roles and responsibilities involved in creating and managing outdoor public spaces, community defined needs and values that should be reflected in outdoor public spaces, strategic challenges to address for outdoor public spaces, and recommendations for supporting grassroots outdoor public space initiatives.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The individuals and organizations involved in the creation, maintenance, and operation of Calgary’s outdoor public spaces are critical components of the overall system. Over the course of the project, community advocates and City employees with direct involvement and experience in outdoor public space projects provided perspective on who these individuals and organizations are; this feedback is summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Outdoor Public Space Roles and Responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY / MANDATE
Community Advocate	Community advocates are the lifeblood of grassroots park development. They experience and identify a need within their communities and put the effort and passion into driving projects forward that will address that need.
Community Associations	Community associations can serve as an administrative hub for community-led outdoor public spaces. They act as the legal entity that bridges individuals within the community to the civic structures and partner organizations required to develop and maintain a public space. They may also act as a core fiscal and legal partner for community initiatives and are a gatekeeper for community advocates seeking to advance a project.
Community Project Managers	Projects are 2-3 year initiatives that require a high degree of coordination and engagement. This necessitates that a project manager is engaged in some capacity, whether that’s the community advocate themselves or a support service provided through organizations like Parks Foundation.
Landscape Architects	Landscape architects work with project teams to design the structures and features that will best accomplish the goals of the space within constraints such as budgets, legal requirements, and the existing landscape. They are necessary partners for community advocates when attempting to turn a concept into a concrete plan, and their designs serve as key inputs for community engagement, fundraising and permitting.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY / MANDATE
Fundraising Coordinators & Grant Writers	An outdoor public space project will likely require external funding. Partnering with individuals or organizations that have expertise writing grants and coordinating fundraising efforts will support fundraising activities.
Homeowners' / Residents' Associations (HOAs)	These associations exist in some communities and leverage mandatory fees from property owners in the community to maintain the quality and value of common amenities. While not a traditional partner in outdoor public space projects, developers and The City increasingly rely on HOAs to provide and maintain community amenities within new developments and these organizations will increasingly play a role in the development of outdoor spaces in the future.
Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators (NPCs)	NPCs support community associations and social recreation groups in areas of lease and license of occupation, organizational development, financial management, facility maintenance and capital construction support. They connect advocates to City resources, support engagement activities, and provide guidance in the provision of programs, services, and City requirements for permitting. They are a valuable point of contact and support for community advocates looking to navigate the administrative aspects of outdoor public space projects.
Calgary Councillors	City Councillors set priorities, establish policy and make decisions for The City based on information from many groups and citizens. Their role is not to support or advocate for any individual outdoor public space project or community advocate, however they do advocate for the community members they represent within a broader civic perspective, and collectively influence the policies and funds available for outdoor public space projects. Council staff are the main point of contact for community members and associations.
Calgary Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategists	Community Strategists are City employees within Calgary Parks & Open Spaces who act as advocates for community parks and liaisons with the City's processes. They serve as communicators and facilitators between different City departments to support outdoor public space projects and guide community advocates through administrative requirements.
Funders	The cost to develop and maintain an outdoor public space is beyond the capacity of most individuals and small organizations. Given the benefits of these spaces, there are a variety of funding agencies that are fundamental to the success of most outdoor public space projects. The AGLC was identified as a notable organization in relation to fundraising through charitable gaming.
Parks Foundation	Parks Foundation provides staff and expertise to support outdoor public space projects. They are a vital partner organization for community advocates who require project management and administrative support to bring their vision to life. They offer fundraising support for grassroots organizations, in addition to offering 3 grants related to outdoor space development.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY / MANDATE
Non-Profit Partners	Non-profit organizations (e.g., Vivo for Healthier Generations) have the potential to bridge administrative and organizational gaps experienced by grassroots organizations who are unable to partner with their community association. Non-profits are likely to become increasingly important to outdoor public space projects in areas where community associations have limited capacity to support projects.
Calgary Parks & Open Spaces	Calgary Parks & Open Spaces is a municipal business unit and serves an administrative and maintenance function with the mission to contribute and sustain dynamic communities through parks and open spaces.

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND VALUES

The information presented within this section reflects community perspectives on the value outdoor public spaces provide and the perceived needs they meet. The themes and insights were identified through the Values and Needs Event, and can be considered in future outdoor public space initiatives as a means of incorporating community perspectives into the planning and decision-making process.





Health and Wellbeing

Outdoor public spaces should provide opportunities for physical activity and social connection, both of which contribute to the health and wellbeing of community members. Three Health and wellbeing considerations include:

- 1. Variety and Inclusivity:** Outdoor public spaces should support a variety of physical activities and accommodate a range of abilities, interests, intensity levels, and ages.
- 2. Generational Health:** Outdoor public spaces should provide both older and younger generations with opportunities to develop and maintain physical, mental, and social skills in a supportive environment.

- 3. Joy and Entertainment:** Outdoor public spaces will be more effective at promoting community health and wellbeing when they create joyful experiences for community members to engage in recreational and social activities.

When [my son] is playing [hockey], we can have our own fun as physical activity and all, and some fun for the families once again, and it should be affordable also.

Place Matters Event Participant



Connectivity

Outdoor public spaces should create a sense of connectedness and inclusivity within and between communities. Two connectivity considerations include:

- 1. Social Connection:** Outdoor public spaces should provide community members with opportunities to get to know other community

members, make friends, and gather with familiar faces.

- 2. Geographic Connection:** Outdoor public spaces should be connected in such a way that they create connections to other spaces and become part of a wholistic, interconnected system of community assets.



Prosperity

Outdoor public spaces should be a source of prosperity for the communities they are part of and can be developed in collaboration with local businesses. Two prosperity considerations include:

- 1. Giving Back:** Outdoor public spaces should provide a mechanism for local businesses to engage and give back to their communities.

- 2. Economic Growth:** Outdoor public spaces should serve as an asset to attract businesses and customers to a community and support the attraction and retention of employees who enjoy working in the community.



Safety and Inclusion

Outdoor public spaces should be safe spaces that promote a sense of belonging among all community members that use them. Two safety and inclusion considerations include:

- 1. Ownership:** Outdoor public spaces should provide opportunities for community members to care for and maintain them. Having ownership over a piece of public space allows community members to feel a sense of pride; communities that own and create spaces will be less likely to damage them.

Where everyone can be different, show up as whoever they are, and are accepted for that.

Place Matters Event Participant

- 2. Diversity and Accessibility:** Outdoor public spaces should be accessible and welcoming to individuals of all abilities and backgrounds and serve as spaces to learn about the perspectives and values of other community members.



Inspiration and Creativity

Outdoor public spaces should be sources of inspiration for community members, encouraging them to think differently. Three inspiration considerations include:

- 1. Art and Stories:** Outdoor public spaces should incorporate artistic elements and infrastructure that help create a sense of identity and tell unifying stories.
- 2. Events:** Outdoor public spaces should create opportunities for community to gather and celebrate through shared events and activities.
- 3. Nature:** Outdoor public spaces should incorporate natural elements that facilitate a sense of connection with, and appreciation for, the environment.

Not only physical activities, but also mental activities, so we feel happy to have more activities to help our kids grow here.

Place Matters Event Participant

CHALLENGES FOR OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

The following section consolidates feedback from Subject Matter Expert Interviews into themes, which reflect challenges in the creation, activation, and maintenance of Calgary's outdoor public spaces. These challenges are opportunities to enhance the sustainability and vibrancy of Calgary's outdoor public spaces by understanding and managing them.

An Evolving Sense of Community

What We Heard: Community is not confined to geographic space or the boundaries of a specific neighborhood. Community can be built around any group of shared values, from culture and religion to activities and interests. Digital connections and the relative ease of transportation increasingly connect Calgarians to communities that exist outside of the neighborhoods where they live. This may be contributing to Calgarians' diminishing connection to their geographic community and community associations.

Challenge: Systems for outdoor public spaces that depend on traditional community structures (e.g., community associations as the legal entity representing community interests to the City) are at risk of becoming outdated or under-resourced as residents' connection to those structures diminishes.

Recommendation: Explore opportunities to strengthen community member connections to their geographic community and evolve processes to accommodate governance models that don't involve community associations.

Community Association Capacity

What We Heard: Declining community engagement is contributing to reduced volunteerism and financial contribution to community associations. Many associations struggle to cover operational costs, let alone support additional projects. The capacity of community associations to support grassroots organizations is inconsistent between communities and can vary over time within a community.

Challenge: When a community association lacks the functional capacity to support grassroots initiatives or community-driven projects, systems that depend on community associations as the bridge to The City or as fiscal/legal agents are ineffective.

Recommendation: Additional project funding and alternate partnership models are necessary to support the development of outdoor public spaces in areas where community associations have low functional capacity.

Outdoor Member Spaces

What We Heard: The amenities and infrastructure within outdoor spaces are not always public. Calgary communities, both new and old, may be part of Home Owners' Associations or Residents' Associations (HOAs), which through mandatory fees, cover the costs associated with community amenities. This is becoming more prevalent within Calgary as developers of new communities increasingly rely on HOAs to own the amenities built to attract new residents.

Challenge: The shift towards HOAs may resolve the challenges associated with limited capacity among community associations. However, the spaces these organizations support are often restricted to fee-paying community members and their guests, and therefore aren't truly publicly accessible. Over reliance on HOAs to support outdoor spaces could reduce the availability of outdoor public spaces within communities.

Recommendation: Additional evaluation of the role of HOAs should be explored with consideration for their potential to create more resilient and innovative community spaces, possibly at the expense of their accessibility.

Equity Gaps

What we Heard: Existing community equity gaps may result in a disproportionate inability of equity seeking communities to lead outdoor public space projects; individuals within these communities often lack the financial resources, time, or process familiarity to effectively step into the community advocate role.

Challenge: Processes for developing outdoor public spaces could perpetuate community inequities when they are dependent on community members taking on an advocacy role.

Recommendation: Further engagement with equity seeking communities, and review of existing programs (e.g., Parks Foundation currently supports equity seeking groups in underserved communities) is required to identify appropriate recommendations to understand and address this challenge.

SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

Subject matter expert interviews provided insight into barriers community advocates encounter when attempting to lead outdoor public space projects. These barriers are presented below, accompanied by a series of opportunities to improve support for Calgarians looking to take on the role of a community advocate and lead a grassroots initiative. The Community Advocate Toolkit is an example of a resource aimed at supporting community advocates.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Barrier: Grassroots projects depend on partnerships with other individuals and organizations to be successful (e.g., fiscal agency, liability management, project management, design and permitting, volunteer management). However, identifying and collaborating with the necessary partners is a common challenge for community advocates.

Opportunities to Support:

- Support diversified governance models that enable community advocates to work with non-profit associations and societies beyond their community association.
- Provide modern mechanisms to connect volunteers with grassroots projects and community initiatives they value (e.g., corporate volunteering platforms).
- Enhance the visibility of existing and upcoming projects to decrease duplication of efforts, increase awareness and engagement, and allow for more effective collaborations within communities.

Here's the actual steps for development. Educating people how to get things built in your community so bylaw officers don't take down your community garden. Nitty gritty – apply to City, why being treated as a developer, not the same thing, not buildings and infrastructure. Same rules apply to trees/pathways to full development of community. A whole bunch of stuff doesn't apply to you, but daunting. Development professionals understand more of process and language.




Funding

Barrier: Additional financial support for outdoor public space projects was consistently identified as a necessary requirement for success, particularly for initiatives lacking seed or start-up funding.

Opportunities to Support:

- A small funding stream (e.g., \$5,000-\$10,000 per community) to kickstart projects and support the pursuit of leveraged funding opportunities.
- Additional funding to support non-profit groups and community associations that is directly tied to supporting grassroots projects.
- Funding to connect grassroots organizations with grant writing experts to increase the likelihood of successful funding applications.
- Support advertising and promotion, particularly as existing grants typically won't cover advertising.
- A larger funding program, such as the previous Leverage Partners Program (LPP), to offer more comprehensive support for projects and advocates on a larger scale.




There are limited cost-effective methods to advertise for engagement activities or community involvement opportunities. Notices from grassroots organizations or community members can't be posted on library bulletin boards or at schools anymore.

Community Advocate

Process Navigation

Barrier: The process of creating or enhancing an outdoor public space involves navigating a series of relationships and requirements which are often not explicitly documented or proceduralized. While organizations (e.g., Parks Foundation) and departments (e.g., Calgary Parks & Open Spaces) exist to support community advocates, the experience of leveraging support across multiple organizations can be confusing and inconsistent (e.g., projects without a community association partner seemingly can't access support from Community Strategists or NPCs).



Individual City representatives have a huge impact on the success of the project. It depends on who you are dealing with, whether or not they will be open minded and try to find ways to make things happen, or just say no.

Community Advocate

Opportunities to Support:

- Additional awareness and organization of key partners and resources would be valuable to help grassroots organizations navigate what can be seen as a complex network of resources, departments and aligned organizations.
- ‘Top-down’ optimization (e.g., inter-organizational service design workshops) is required to identify opportunities to improve the experience of individuals interacting the systems of individuals, organizations, services, and resources involved in outdoor public space projects.
- Better promotion of, and connection to, existing supports (e.g., Parks Foundation Project Managers and Calgary Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategists).
- A comprehensive reference/resource to easily investigate the price ranges for standard amenities (playgrounds, benches, sports fields, hockey rinks, etc.) and maintenance costs.

All the same rules apply to whether you're just planting some trees, kind of, and putting in some pathways, or like developing an entirely new neighborhood from scratch. It can seem daunting from the outside. And people don't really understand that a whole bunch of stuff isn't going to apply to you, and a whole bunch of stuff is not going to be as big of a concern as it is presented to you up front. If you're a development professional, you would for sure be able to understand 75% more of the process and the language and stuff like that.

Non-Profit Advocate



Agency

Barrier: In this context, agency refers to community advocates' need to engage a third party to act on their behalf, from having a fiscal partner to manage fundraising dollars, to having an organization that could hold a lease or license of occupation. Community associations are the de facto partner to provide agency for grassroots initiatives, however misaligned priorities or limited capacity often undermine the ability of a community association to serve this purpose.

Opportunities to Support:

- Alternate models of partnership with entities that can serve as partners in place of community associations should be created and supported.
- Connections for grassroots initiatives to partner with organizations that can act as non-profit partners and fiscal agents should be promoted.

Insurance is the biggest challenge facing most grassroots organizations. The problem is that too many of the grassroots groups are forced to work with CA's that might be overwhelmed and underfunded. Finding connections between grassroots orgs, charities, and corporations interested in supporting initiatives through donating funds or providing insurance coverage will be huge in the future.



Community Advocate

Maintenance and Activation

Barrier: The effort and cost associated with the maintenance and activation of outdoor public spaces are often an afterthought and can be difficult to raise funds for. Managing maintenance and optional amenity costs was identified as a frequent barrier to the development of innovative 'out-of-the-box' spaces. Sharing success stories is an often-overlooked part of activation but is necessary to inspire future community advocates to take on outdoor public space projects of their own.

Opportunities to Support:

- Review of the logic and application of the existing standards for maintenance of amenities appears to be warranted. [Creating Coventry](#) is a North Calgary community-driven project that would serve as a valuable resource to incorporate into such a review.
- Additional funding that includes maintenance and activation activities as eligible expenses could support more innovative spaces and creative activation activities.
- Sources of funding and additional organizational support to share positive impacts and success stories regarding outdoor public space projects will help build momentum in communities and inspire future volunteers and advocates.
- Providing training for community volunteers to support these actions (e.g., through a program akin to the Planning department's training for community volunteers) would reduce community advocate burnout, support succession planning, and align with the current City Council's goals to build social resilience and strong communities.

I do think Calgary is behind, I think it's largely because we're a newer city and we don't have as many examples of successful projects or people who have had a lot of exposure to them, and we have a tendency to jump on the negative ones instead of celebrating our successful ones. You know, because literally on that project I had to talk about the blue ring all day, every day ... But since then, a thousand other great projects have happened. So, I think maybe shifting the conversation to some of those successes and what has come out of some of the real good projects would be more important.



Community Advocate

Maintain Support for What Works

Facilitators: Across the course of the project, there were numerous instances in which community members and advocates spoke to aspects of outdoor public space system that work well. One of the best ways to help grassroots initiatives is to ensure that the parts of the system which work receive continued support, including:

- **Existing Funding Sources:** The fundings sources that do exist for outdoor public space projects are hugely beneficial. Being able to leverage Alberta's charitable gaming model in partnership with the AGLC was identified as one of the most effective ways to fundraise. Parks Foundation offers a number of grants which community advocates and associations benefit from. Streamlining access to existing funding sources would magnify the benefit.
- **Existing Support Organizations:** The organizations that currently exist with a mandate to support outdoor public space projects and community advocates (e.g., Calgary Parks & Open Spaces, Parks Foundation, community associations) are instrumental in empowering and guiding community advocates. Increasing the capacity of these organizations through additional funding and support will enable them to continue providing this benefit.
- **Community Advocacy:** The passion and dedication of community advocates is a key ingredient in the success of many outdoor public space projects. The individuals who have successfully completed a project have a wealth of lived experience that they are often willing to share with others and this should be capitalized on.

Definitely go through Parks Foundation. They're amazing. Their resources are amazing. The account management that they do is amazing, the grants that they offer. They partnered with us on a few grants that we were having a tricky time talking our Community Association into. They handled all of our finances. They kept all the money that we fundraised and they paid all of our invoices and they did that all for free. They don't take a cut or anything and we couldn't have done it without them.



Community Advocate

NORTH CALGARY PRIORITIES



INTRODUCTION

This section of the report provides an approach to the prioritization of outdoor public space projects in North Calgary communities. It begins with an overview of the project teams' approach to translating community feedback into actionable insights, and then summarizes these insights through projects and strategies for outdoor public space prioritization.

TRANSLATING FEEDBACK TO PRIORITIES

This project sought to identify priorities for outdoor public spaces in North Calgary through a series of

community engagement activities. These activities provided the project team with a mix of qualitative and quantitative data from hundreds of residents from North Calgary communities via written notes (e.g., sticky notes and cue cards), 'votes' (e.g., allocating tokens at event stations), verbal feedback (e.g., video interviews and group discussions) and open text responses (e.g., capital projects survey questions). A combination of qualitative analysis techniques were used to extract meaning from this feedback, including Narrative Analysis, Qualitative Content Analysis, and Thematic Analysis (see Table 10). An example of the thematic analysis approach used to translate open text data into themes is presented in Figure 5.

Table 10. Qualitative Data and Analysis Approach

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY	DATA	ANALYSIS
Values and Needs Event	Post it Boards (n = ~75)	Written Responses	Thematic Analysis
	Bus Tours (n = 57)	Facilitated Discussions	Content & Narrative Analysis
	Video Interviews (n=10)	Audio Visual Recordings	Content & Narrative Analysis
Capital Projects Survey	Survey (n=25)	Open text Responses	Projects Summarized
Prioritization Event	Post it Boards (n= ~170)	Written Responses	Thematic Analysis
	Voting Stations (n = ~180)	Vote Counts	Descriptive Statistics

Figure 5. Example Thematic Analysis of Prioritization Event Feedback

Station 1: Reason for a park being their favorite

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK	“ <i>Walking paths with undisturbed nature</i>	“ <i>Because of the playground</i>	“ <i>Walking + biking + wildlife</i>	“ <i>I love Harvest Hills Park because I love parks</i>
PRIMARY THEME	Natural Elements	Specific Activity	Multifunctional	Love and Fun
SECONDARY THEME	Pathways	Kids and Playgrounds	Pathways	General

Station 4: Reason for prioritizing a park type

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK	“ <i>Social gathering, availability to meet people</i>	“ <i>I want more trees to keep us from carbon dioxide</i>	“ <i>Maintain existing green spaces not build housing projects on existing green spaces</i>	“ <i>There should be free outdoor activities available to everyone!</i>	“ <i>Important for children to have active free areas to play</i>
PRIMARY THEME	Social Connection	Natural Spaces	Natural Places	Equity and Diversity	Health and Wellbeing
SECONDARY THEME	Gathering Spaces	Environmental	Maintenance	Financial Affordability	Generational Health

COMMUNITY PROJECT LIST

Community organizations that responded to the Capital Projects Survey described a series of outdoor public space projects which they are currently seeking support for. The following list serves as a starting point for North Calgary outdoor public space prioritization. These projects are at various stages of development, and in many instances the community organizations have already been in communication with Parks Foundation to determine what support may be needed; these are marked with an “*” in the list. Please refer to page 53 of this report for more detail.

- Creating Coventry Future Phases*
- Hidden Valley Heights Playground Revitalization
- Keystone Community Hub New Beginnings Church
- Keystone Project
- Kincora Sport Court and Gathering Project*
- Northern Hills Community Association Community Gathering & Hub Space
- Panorama Hills Community Centre Expansion
- Sandstone MacEwan Rink Project*
- Sage Hill Community Garden
- Symons Valley Park Project*
- Vacant Lots Farm Club Project
- Vivo Art and Community Gathering Project*

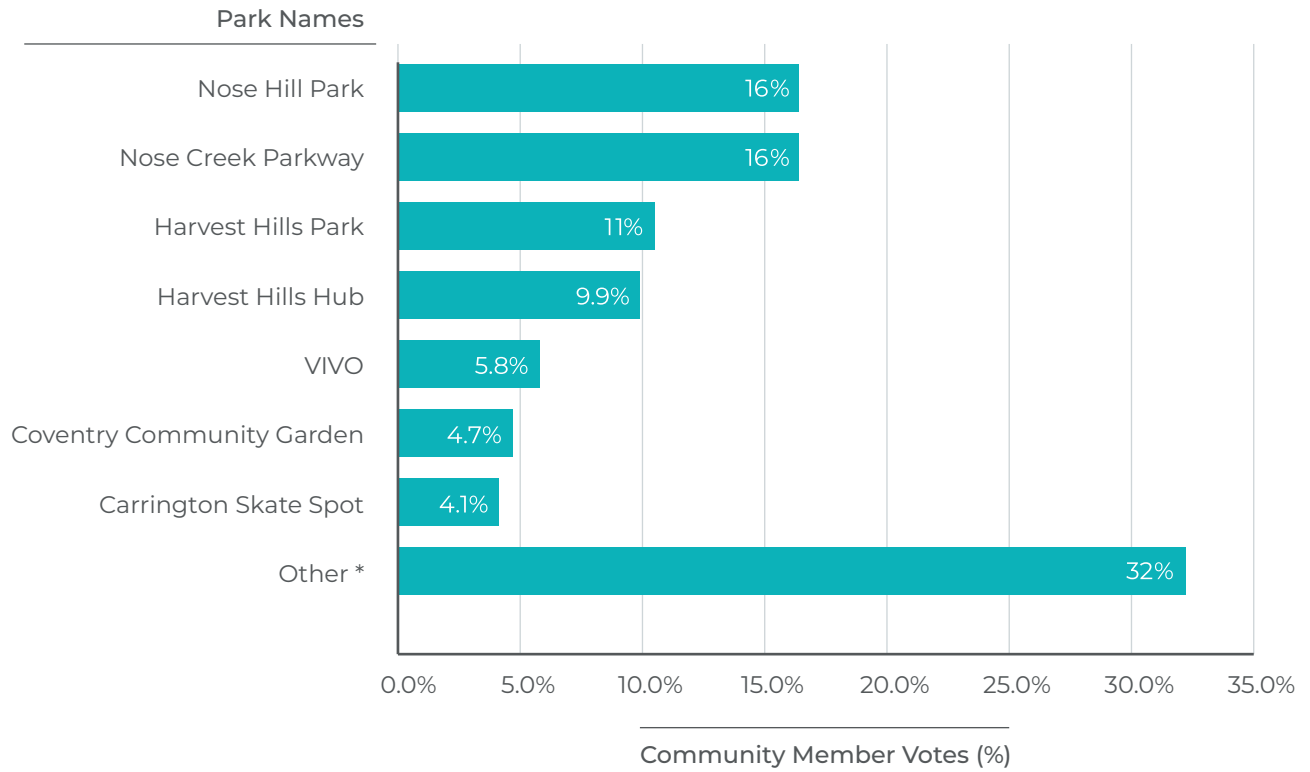
EXISTING PARK PREFERENCES

Participants at the Prioritization Event were asked to write down their favorite park and provide a short description of why it was their favorite. Participants were shown a map depicting a subset of North Calgary’s outdoor public spaces to help them think of their favorite, although this may have biased responses a number of participants identified spaces that were not shown on the map. Figure 6 presents the responses and reveals that Nose Hill Park and Nose Creek Park were the favorite among 32% of event attendees. Both spaces are large nature-based spaces that support a breadth of

activities and serve as destination parks for multiple communities. These are unique, multi-purpose amenities, and demonstrate both the need and desire for a regional park in North Calgary. This data provides perspective on the types of existing park spaces North Calgarians appreciate, and additional event feedback indicates large, nature based, multi-functional spaces are generally appreciated.



Figure 6. Favorite Outdoor Public Spaces in North Calgary



*Other includes: Evanston Community Park (0.6%), MacEwan Glen Park (0.6%), Sage Hill Ice Rink (0.6%), Hidden Hut Inclusive Playground (0.6%), VIVO Inclusive Playground (0.6%), Panorama Hills Ridge Park (0.6%), Sage Hill Park (0.6%), Sandstone Rink (0.6%), Carrington Zipline Park (0.6%), Sallamie Park (1.2%), Covecreek Playground (1.8%), Livingston Community Association Hub (1.8%), Tiger Sport Court in Panorama (2.9%), Country Hills Park (2.9%), Hidden Ranch Park (3.5%), Huntington Hills Skatepark (3.5%), Livingston Pump Track (3.5%)



OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACE PRIORITIES

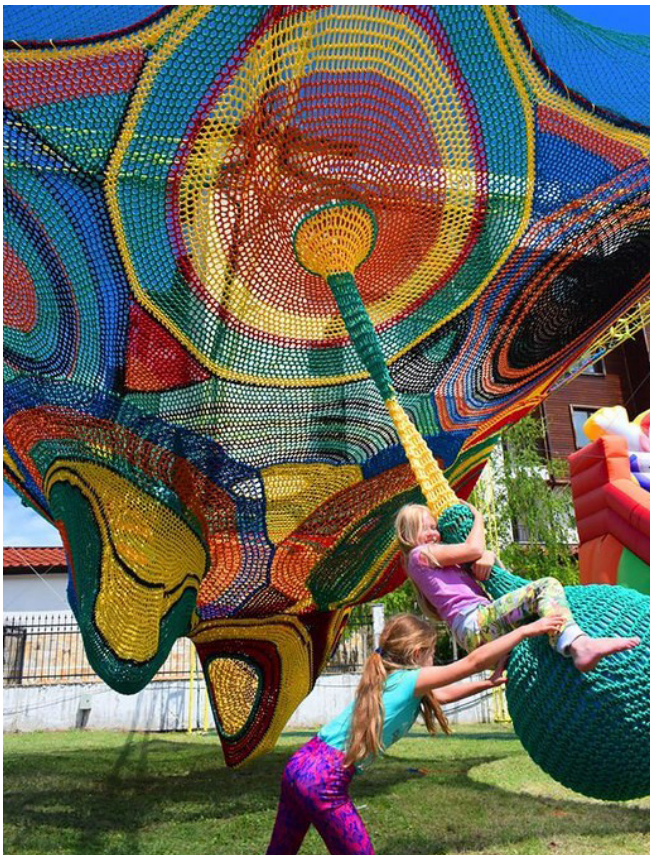
Prioritization Categories

Community members bring different perspectives to the discussion of priorities and preferences for outdoor public space projects. The feedback received in this project identified three categories that can be used to organize North Calgary's priorities for outdoor public spaces.

- **Outdoor Public Space Type or Activity:** Spaces can be prioritized based on the specific activities they afford (e.g., pump tracks or splash parks) or more generally based on a type of space (e.g., natural park spaces or social gathering spaces). Activities discussed by community members can be generalized into park types, but park types can't be

decomposed in specific outdoor public spaces without additional consultation.

- **Outdoor Public Space Characteristics:** Spaces can be prioritized based on their characteristics (e.g., convenient or within walking distance, contains natural elements). These characteristics are often precursors for a type of park space to deliver its proposed benefit (e.g., if a park isn't accessible, it won't be used regardless of the type of activity).
- **Outdoor Public Space Purpose:** Spaces can be prioritized based on the purpose or benefit they provide. For example, individuals may seek to have more spaces in their community that support physical activity or mental health, or they may desire spaces that will foster socialization and the opportunity to meet new people.



Outdoor Public Space Types and Activities

Identifying Priority Types and Activities

Approximately 203 community members voted on their preferred activities and types of outdoor public spaces during the Prioritization Event. Each individual cast 5 'votes' via stickers on boards depicting various activity types, with a total of 1,016¹ votes cast (see Table 11 for the aggregated data for all participant responses). With respect to Park Types, there was relatively little spread between categories and all five types are presented rank ordered by percentage of votes received.

Priority Outdoor Public Space Activities

1. Playful Art (7.3%)
2. Play Parks (6.9%)
3. More Trees and Plants (6.9%)
4. Parkour & Climbing (6.3%)
5. Natural Play Spaces (6.2%)
6. Active Art (6.1%)
7. Multi-Use Sport Court (5.9%)

Priority Outdoor Public Space Types

1. Nature Based Spaces (23%)
2. Social Gathering and Learning Spaces (21%)
3. Play Spaces (20%)
4. Sport and Activity Spaces (18%)
5. Public Art Spaces (18%)

Recommendations for Prioritizing Types and Activities

There is no clear majority when it comes to selecting a specific activity or a park type (i.e., no activity or type received over 50% of the vote or a significant proportion of the vote). To address

this, multi-functional spaces that accommodate a broader range of community member interests could be prioritized. This approach aligns with the top 7 rank ordered activities, all of which serve multiple purposes by either crossing park type boundaries (e.g., nature based play spaces combine nature based spaces and play spaces, playful art combines public art spaces with play spaces) or by offering multiple specific activities to park users (e.g., multi-use sport courts provide a range of activity options within the category of Sport and Activity Spaces).

Priority Type and Activity Caveats

The image used to represent each activity may have introduced a response bias among participants. Event volunteers noticed that certain images appeared to solicit more responses because they looked 'more fun' or engaging than others. For example, the Playful Art image depicted children playing on a stylized swing, and it's open to interpretation whether participants were voting for the Art or the Play or the combination of both. In addition, volunteers noted that when a voting 'board' was full and replaced with a blank board it seemed to receive fewer votes. Respondents may have favored voting for boards which already had many votes.



Prioritize multi-functional spaces that accommodate a range of interest and activities.

¹ Margin of error associated with the vote count could be measurement error when the project team tabulated votes or a result of participants fewer participants casting more or more participants casting fewer than their allocated 5 votes.

Table 11. Community Member Preferred Outdoor Public Space Types

TYPE OF SPACE	ACTIVITY	% TYPE CATEGORY	% TOTAL
Nature Based Spaces (23%)	More Trees and Plants	30.0%	6.9%
	Natural Play Spaces	27.0%	6.2%
	Pollination Corridors	14.6%	3.3%
	Mental Health & Healing Garden	12.4%	2.9%
	Community Gardens & Urban Farms*	11.2%	2.6%
	Sensory & Medicine Wheel Garden	4.7%	1.1%
Social Gathering & Learning Spaces (21%)	Learning Space	23.5%	5.0%
	Plaza & Festivals	23.0%	4.9%
	4 Season Spaces*	22.6%	4.8%
	Community Gathering*	16.6%	3.5%
	Roadside Retail & Patio	7.4%	1.6%
	Shade Structure & Seating	6.9%	1.5%
Play Spaces (20%)	Play Park*	34.0%	6.9%
	Dog Park*	21.4%	4.3%
	Snow Park	20.4%	4.1%
	Inclusive Playgrounds*	19.4%	3.9%
	Play Hubs with Loose Parts	4.9%	1.0%
Sport & Activity Spaces (18%)	Parkour & Climbing*	35.4%	6.3%
	Multi-Use Sport Court*	33.1%	5.9%
	Disc Golf	14.4%	2.6%
	Pump Track & Skate Park*	12.2%	2.2%
	Nordic Track	2.8%	0.5%
	Cricket	2.2%	0.4%
Public Art Spaces (18%)	Playful Art	41.3%	7.3%
	Active Art	34.6%	6.1%
	Social Public Art	15.1%	2.7%
	Parking Lot Art	5.6%	1.0%
	Community Art	3.4%	0.6%

* Activity also mentioned in the Capital Projects Survey

Note: Activities with over 3.6% of the vote can be considered above average, and activities with over 5.8% of the vote (highlighted in green) could be considered to be a standard deviation above average and a "Top Priority".

Outdoor Public Space Characteristics

Identifying Priority Characteristics

Participants were asked to share their favorite existing park and provide a reason why that park was their favorite. These reasons were thematically analyzed, then themes associated with park characteristics were tallied and rank ordered by how frequently they occurred (see Table 12).

Top Priority Outdoor Public Space Characteristics

1. Parks that have Natural Elements (20%)
2. Parks that are Kid Friendly / Have Playgrounds (17%)
3. Parks that are Close By (15%)
4. Parks that Have Pathways (9%)

Recommendations for Prioritizing Characteristics

Priority characteristics can be incorporated into outdoor public space designs to encourage their appeal to North Calgary community members. Characteristics that were more popular would presumably appeal to a larger subset of community members (e.g., incorporating natural elements into a park will increase its appeal among more individuals than adding art).

Priority Characteristic Caveats

Qualitative analysis of participant written comments is subject to the analyst's interpretation. It's possible the themes which were described don't accurately reflect the thinking of the community member who provided the comment. Often this is managed through creating objective definitions of a theme and having multiple analysts review qualitative data to provide a measure of inter-rater reliability when interpreting the data. Additionally, these themes could be validated with additional feedback from community members to ensure they accurately reflect community member perspectives.

Table 12. Preferred Characteristics of Outdoor Public Spaces

CHARACTERISTIC OR FEATURE	COUNT	%
Natural elements	28	20%
Kids and Playgrounds	23	17%
Proximity	21	15%
Pathways	9	6.5%
Big	4	2.9%
Family Oriented	2	1.4%
Art	1	0.7%
Other*	51	37%

*Other includes participant feedback pertaining to the following themes not related to park characteristics: General = 12%, Biking = 6.5%, Skateboarding = 4.3%, Sport = 4.3%, Age Inclusive = 2.2%, Dog Park = 2.2%, Splash Park = 1.4%, Events = 0.7%, Picnic Area = 0.7%, Sand = 0.7%.



Outdoor public spaces which 'effectively' incorporate these characteristics will be preferred by community members. When prioritizing which features to incorporate, spaces which have natural elements, are kid friendly, are close to community members and incorporate pathways are likely to be appreciated by many.

Outdoor Public Space Purposes

Identifying Priority Purposes

Participants at the Prioritization Event were asked to vote on the importance of different purposes a park can serve in by rank ordering six pre-determined categories using a six-point scale (1 = the Most Important; 6 = the Least Important). A total of 187 community members responded, these responses were aggregated using unweighted Top Box (i.e., a category ranked 1, 2 or 3) and Bottom Box (i.e., category ranked 4,5,6) percentages (see Figure 7).

Community members were also asked to provide written descriptions for why they invested in certain

park types of activities in previous event stations. Their responses provided qualitative data related to a park's purposes that was thematically analyzed, with the frequency of themes tallied and rank ordered (see Table 13) to generate a list of priority purposes.

Top Priority Outdoor Public Space Purposes

1. Recreation and Entertainment (30%)
2. Equity and Diversity (16%)
3. Social Connection (11%)
4. Health and Well Being (10%)
5. Community Development (7%)

Figure 7. The Perceived Importance of an Outdoor Public Space's Purposes

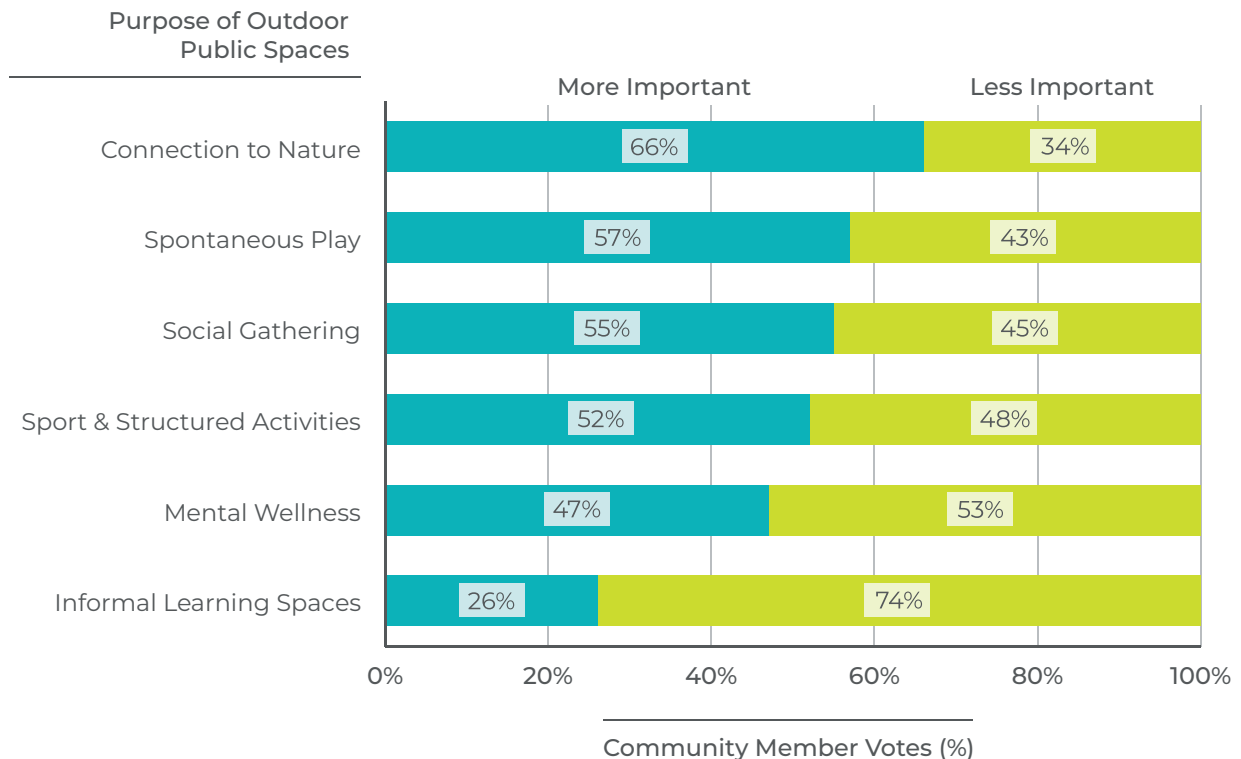


Table 13. Participant Perspectives on an Outdoor Public Space's Purpose

PRIMARY THEMES	THEME COUNT	THEME PERCENTAGE
Recreation and Entertainment	76	30%
Equity and Diversity	41	16%
Social Connection	27	11%
Health and Well Being	24	10%
Community Development	18	7.2%
Other*	65	25%

**Other includes participant feedback pertaining to the following themes not related to an outdoor public space's purpose: Natural = 10%, Convenience = 9%, General = 6.4%.*

Recommendations for Prioritizing Park Purposes

Like recommendations for prioritizing activities and types, a strategy to address the diversity of perceived purposes a park should serve would be to accommodate multiple purposes. For example, recreational activities can simultaneously support health and well-being and social connection. Many individuals spoke about the importance of promoting generational health by having spaces that were age inclusive and promoted childhood development through play or connection to nature.

Parks which provide a connection to Nature are generally viewed more favorably by a majority of community members, whereas parks that serve as informal learning spaces were the least likely to be preferred. The top / bottom box ordering provides a measure to evaluate community

member consensus around the purpose of a park. For example, 66% of community members voted Connection to Nature was in their “Top Three” purposes for a park, whereas 34% voted Connection to Nature was in the “Bottom Three”, indicating greater consensus that Connection to Nature was an important purpose compared to a Sport and Structured Activities which was relatively evenly split (52% indicating it was in their top three and 48% indicating it was in their bottom three).

Exploring sub themes within these perspectives provides insight into mechanisms which could be incorporated to support an outdoor public space in delivering on its intended purpose (see Figure 8). For example, community members who believed a park should support recreation and enjoyment often referenced a specific activity (e.g., biking); or when considering Equity and Diversity spoke to financial affordability. However, this was not the primary purpose of the prioritization event and the lessons learned in this regard are worth consideration for subsequent engagement activities.

Priority Purpose Caveats

A caveat to this exercise is that parks may serve dual purposes simultaneously, for example community members may view informal learning spaces more favorably if they are incorporated into natural park spaces. In addition, qualitative analyses considerations discussed previously apply to the data as presented in Table 13.



Outdoor public spaces that afford opportunities for recreation and entertainment are one of the top priorities for North Calgarians, but what those specific opportunities are varies person to person.

Figure 8. Sub Themes Associated with Park Purposes



PRIORITIZATION PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles were derived through the project team's experience engaging community members to prioritize outdoor public spaces. These principles provide a framework for considering how outdoor public spaces can be developed with the best interests of their communities in mind.

Reflect Community Values

Throughout the project, community members have been asked to speak about the values they attach to outdoor public spaces. These values are presented in Community Needs and Values as they are relevant to all of Calgary's outdoor public spaces. However, they should also be included when considering the prioritization of North Calgary outdoor public spaces and so are reiterated here:

- **Inspiration and Activation:** Outdoor public spaces should inspire community members through art, events, and connection to nature.
 - **Joy and Entertainment:** Outdoor public spaces should be places of joy for community members where they can go and engage in activities they value and enjoy.
- **Connectivity:** Outdoor public spaces should actively connect community members with each other, with the natural environment, and with other communities.
 - **Prosperity:** Outdoor public spaces should provide opportunities for businesses to grow locally and connect with community members while also giving back to the communities they are part of.
 - **Safety and Belonging:** Outdoor public spaces should foster a sense of safety and belonging in the community by giving community members ownership of public spaces, promoting diversity, and being accessible and inclusive.
 - **Health and Wellbeing:** Outdoor public spaces should promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all individuals within the community they serve through a variety of activities.
 - **Maintenance and Sustainment:** Outdoor public spaces need to be developed with consideration for how they will be maintained and kept in good condition.



Commit to Continued Engagement

The following considerations should be incorporated into future prioritization initiatives that involve community engagement, as well as the application of the prioritization recommendations provided within this report:

- 1. Representative Engagement:** When prioritizing spaces for a specific community, ensure members of that community have an opportunity to share their perspectives. This can come down to ensuring opportunities to be heard are diverse and that they are convenient to residents based on their geographic location. Both events within this project were held at Vivo and the demographic information collected indicated that communities closest to Vivo (i.e., Panorama, Country Hills, and Coventry Hills) were over-represented relative to other communities. Community members impacted by proposed outdoor public spaces projects should be provided with additional opportunity to have their voices heard (e.g., smaller, regional engagement activities hosted at regional community centers or public spaces).
- 2. Un-biased Engagement:** Much of the data reviewed comes from community events, in which community members were providing feedback directly in front of other community members. This could contribute psychological pressures that bias participant responses (e.g., social desirability bias) to the point that aren't truly reflective of their beliefs and attitudes. Concerns regarding this can be addressed through future community engagement activities providing opportunities for participants to provide feedback anonymously (e.g., secret ballot voting, post event surveys, non-public written feedback).
- 3. Meaningful Engagement:** The principles of engagement described in The Community Engagement Process were developed specifically for this project. They serve as a valuable starting point for developing meaningful engagement strategies but

should be adapted as necessary in the context of any future engagement opportunity. Community engagement initiatives are more meaningful when they are planned within existing community networks of associations and leaders.

Strive for Balance

This project identified that while many community members see the value in having multi-purpose spaces (e.g., multi-use pathways, multi-use sport courts) there are still many that desire spaces that serve a specific purpose (e.g., skate parks and pump tracks). This variability in how community members enjoy outdoor public spaces should be viewed as an opportunity to promote balance and diversity in their design. When a specific space is being built, elements that support other uses of the space (e.g., community gathering spaces, natural elements) should be incorporated, and vice versa opportunities to support specific activities within multi-use spaces should be considered where there is an area of need. For example, data presented in Table 1. North Calgary Community Assets Per Capita indicates Carrington does not provide access to an off-leash dog park.



NEXT STEPS



CALGARY'S OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

The 'systems' that direct and govern the development, activation and maintenance of outdoor public spaces are comprised of interconnected policies, requirements, processes, roles, and interests. This report identifies a series of factors which can be considered components of that system which could be optimized to enhance the efficiency and satisfaction of the people who work within these systems. The two primary opportunities to address the challenges identified include funding and process optimization.

- 1. Funding:** Individuals involved in the project identified opportunities in which outdoor public space systems could be enhanced through additional funding. Additional funding programs could bolster existing support organizations (e.g., additional staffing for outdoor public space programming), address gaps in the project development process (e.g., seed funding to cover early project costs associated with pursuing matching or leveraged fund opportunities), and mitigate issues associated with equity gaps and limited community association capacity (e.g., funds specifically for these communities).
- 2. Process Optimization:** Outdoor public space systems involve multiple roles distributed across multiple organizations (grassroots or civic) with interdependent responsibilities, leveraging a series of resources that lack unified management systems or service delivery models. Further work is required to better characterize the components of the outdoor public space system and subsequently identify specific process improvements.

NORTH CALGARY'S OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

A series of community-identified projects were presented, in addition to a framework to support additional project prioritization and community

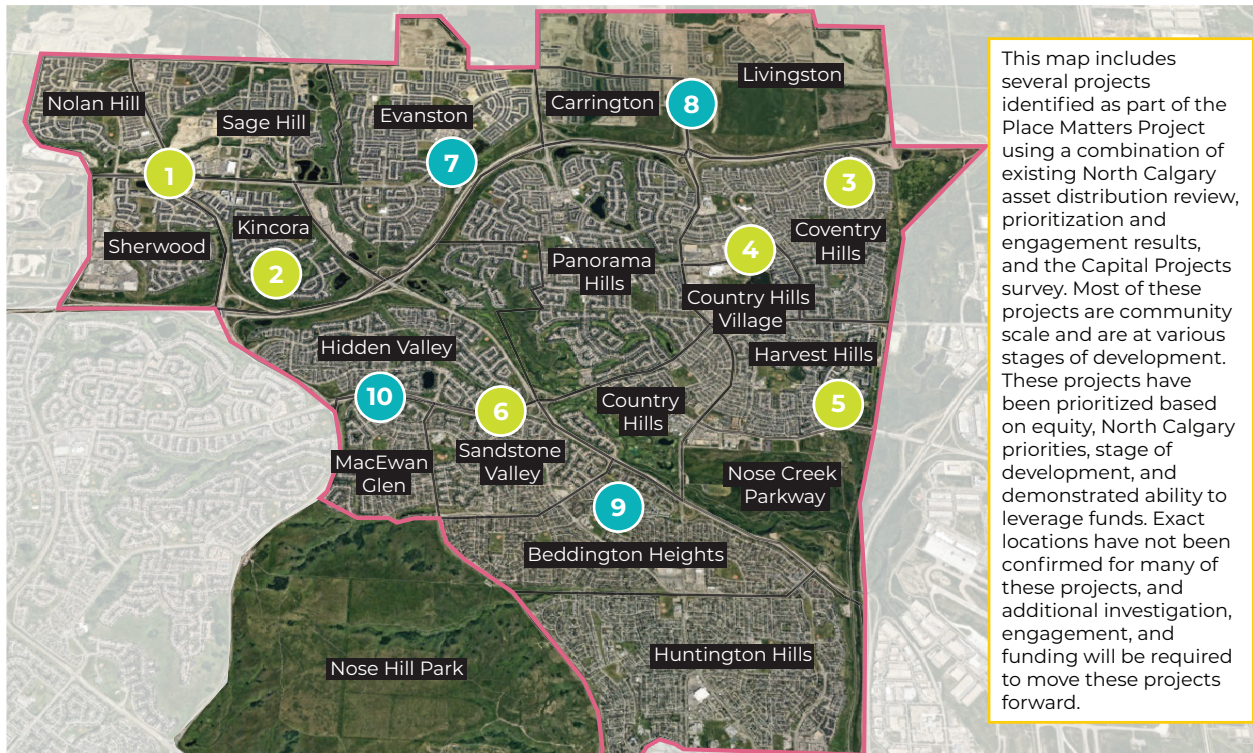
engagement. The latter is significant as continued community engagement is necessary for future prioritization at a community-by-community level to ensure under-represented communities are appropriately consulted in the prioritization of existing and new projects. The current project list, outdoor public space priorities, and existing asset distributions can be leveraged to inform prioritization strategies, an example of which is presented in North Calgary Prioritization Map. The implementation of such an initiative will require the support of organizations such as the Parks Foundation, in partnership with other community organizations and advocates, and additional project funding.

COMMUNITY TOOLKITS

Presented as appendices to this report are The Community Engagement Toolkit and the Community Advocate Toolkit. Both documents aggregate the lessons learned from this project and present them as recommendations to support community advocates and organizations interested in advancing their own community based outdoor public space initiatives. Additional details on the contents and use of these toolkits are provided within the documents themselves.



NORTH CALGARY PRIORITIZATION MAP



In-Progress Projects (2024-2027)

1. **Symons Valley Park** (~\$3M): Multi-use Park with rink, tennis courts, basketball, pump track, playground, amphitheater, and art in Symons Valley.
2. **Kincora Sport Court & Gathering** (~\$250K - \$400K): Multi-use sport court and community gathering space in Kincora.
3. **Creating Coventry Future Phases** (~\$200K - \$400K): TBD - Games Park / Nature Play Park in Coventry Hills.
4. **VIVO Public Art & Community Gathering** (~\$500K - \$1M): Mural, Active / Playful Art furnishings for gathering at VIVO. \$150K in funding already raised.
5. **North Calgary Pump Track & Gathering Space** (~\$600K - \$900K): Pump track and community gathering space near Nose Creek / Harvest Hills.
6. **Sandstone MacEwan Rink Project** (~\$850K): Multi-use sport and rink space in Sandstone Valley. \$500K in funding already raised.

Future Prioritized Projects (2027-2032)

7. **North Calgary Multi-Use Sports & Plaza Gathering** (~\$500K - \$750K): Basketball, soccer, sport amenity with Plaza in Evanston.
8. **North Calgary Natural Playground and Dog Park** (~\$300K - 500K): Natural Playground and Dog Park in Carrington/Livingston.
9. **Destination Playgrounds:** (~\$500K - \$1M): Destination playground projects with community gathering, prioritizing Beddington Heights.
10. **North Calgary Youth Activity Park** (~\$750K - \$1M): Parkour, skateboarding, basketball, youth-focused amenity in the area of Hidden Valley / Sandstone Valley / MacEwan Glen.

Future Regional Park Project (2027-2032)

11. **North Calgary Regional Park** (\$TBD): Strong desire for regional amenity. Budget, scope and location TBD.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT



INTRO TO THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides information and recommendations to support future community engagement initiatives. It is based on the Place Matters project team’s experience engaging community members in North Calgary and is intended to serve as a resource for community organizations coordinating similar future initiatives.

CHOOSING ENGAGEMENT METHODS

The Place Matters project coordinated four engagement activities, representing three distinct approaches to listening to community member voices and perspectives, each with their own benefits and limitations as described below. Taken collectively, all three approaches complimented each other over the course of this project to provide both a breadth and depth of perspective, as well as qualitative and quantitative data.



A key lesson learned is that approaching community engagement with a variety of methods removes barriers to engagement and contributes to a more representative understanding of community perspectives and priorities.

Table 8. Engagement Method Benefits and Limitations

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	BENEFITS	LIMITATIONS
<p>Community Events: Public events designed to provide a source of joy for attendees while simultaneously encouraging them to provide their perspective on pre-determined issues and questions.</p>	<p>Provide community members an opportunity to create new connections with their community and the project team.</p> <p>Can be a source of joy and entertainment and education for attendees.</p> <p>Provide the project team with the opportunity to solicit insights from the community in a variety of creative ways, from voting stations to video interviews to community tours.</p>	<p>Require a relatively high degree of effort to plan, execute and analyze the resulting data.</p> <p>Provide less structured data than other engagement methods, heavily dependent on the structure of engagement activities.</p> <p>Occur as a single moment in time with limited flexibility to pivot or modify the day of the event.</p>

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	BENEFITS	LIMITATIONS
<p>Semi-Structured Interviews: One-on-one conversations (online or in person) structured to obtain insight around the interviewee's knowledge and experience.</p>	<p>Flexible and conversational approach that supports the development of a personal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee.</p> <p>Can explore issues of specific interest to the project team in detail, and in response to the interviewee's specific knowledge.</p> <p>Can be modified between interviews to explore new topics once a concept or issue is well understood based on previous conversations.</p>	<p>Engage a limited number of community members due to the effort to coordinate, execute and analyze the data.</p> <p>Provide a detailed understanding of processes and perspectives, but do not allow the project team to quantify the magnitude or frequency of the perspectives provided.</p>
<p>Online Surveys: Digital surveys with pre-determined questions distributed via email or anonymous link to audiences of interest.</p>	<p>Provide an opportunity to efficiently reach a large number of community members.</p> <p>Can provide a deeper understanding why issues are important through qualitative data (e.g., open text questions regarding project priorities) and/or the magnitude and frequency of topics through quantitative data (e.g., multiple choice or rank order questions).</p> <p>Allow engagement teams to link multiple data points together (e.g., community member demographic information with the perspectives they provided).</p> <p>Facilitate engagement from individuals who may find it challenging to schedule time for interviews or attend events.</p>	<p>Potentially less engaging than other methods with limited response rates, depending on the existing relationships with the community members being targeting and the incentives offered.</p> <p>Less opportunity to create meaningful or personal connections between the project team and the community members.</p> <p>Digital Survey tools and data require a degree of experience to design and manage.</p>

PLANNING ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Community engagement events require a relatively large effort on behalf of the project team and were the subject of reflection which resulted in a summary of lessons learned presented below.

TOPIC	LESSON LEARNED
EVENT PLANNING	
Event Promotion and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal outreach requires pre-existing networks and a high amount of time and effort on the part of the organizers compared to digital advertising. However, it's free and targeted invitations and pre-registration accounted for approximately 50% of event attendees, demonstrating the success of personal outreach through existing networks. • Engagement through partnership facilitated outreach to numerous local community organizations and leveraged existing networks of trust more effectively than trying to start from scratch. • Combining the prioritization event with an established community event (e.g., partnering with the MPC Foundation and Northern Hills Community Association on Neighbour Day) significantly boosted attendance. • Increasing event visibility with outdoor components including signage, food trucks and activities, encouraged walk-in visitors.
Collaboration and Co-Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning a large event is time intensive, as is collaboration. The core planning group met frequently in the months leading up to the events. When using a co-development model for event planning, additional time may be needed to accommodate discussion and consensus building. • Having regularly scheduled meetings is a helpful way to keep a planning cadence and to ensure key partners are involved in all decisions. • Memorandums of Understanding documenting roles, responsibilities, and time commitments are helpful when bringing in project partners and managing expected commitments before, during, and following an engagement. • Key activators and other community partners have competing time commitments and priorities, ample lead time should be allowed to ensure they are engaged in the planning. • A co-development approach to planning and facilitation was successful in drawing on diverse expertise and ensuring the events were engaging to different audiences. • A collaborative approach brought in partners with in-kind resources (e.g., space, registration systems, event materials, technical equipment) in addition to their knowledge, skills, and community connections. • Having an event plan and facilitation plan supported communication of logistics to a broader team on the day of the event when additional staff and volunteers were brought in to support.

TOPIC	INSIGHT
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	
Community Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event participants and co-facilitators identified that bus tours were an engaging way to bring people together to foster discussion, meet others, and learn about the local community. • The most challenging element of community tours was managing bus capacity/anticipating attendance rates. Bus tour registration closed once at capacity, however there was attrition on the day of and buses were not full. • When planning community tours as part of community engagement, there is a balance between giving information and gaining feedback. Ample time should be given for learning and touring and for gathering feedback and ideas. In addition to discussions, additional ways to capture data (e.g., personal written reflections) should be used to compliment to verbal dialogue. • Video tours could be created to facilitate future in-person or asynchronous digital engagement. • Outdoor discussions can be difficult when there is competing background noise; a proper space and set up for dialogue should be considered.
Joyful Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, family friendly activities, and diverse ways to engage attendees helped attract individuals to the event and encouraged them to stay longer. • Play areas and games were immediate attractions for children, many of whom played for a long time. Parents could be seen participating in some of the more formal engagement opportunities while their children stayed engaged in play, suggesting that the play opportunity helped facilitate adult engagement. • The food trucks and play areas had a larger draw than some of the engagement pieces at the general event and not all attendees participated in the engagement boards. Consideration should be made around the visibility and layout of engagement components, as well as having volunteers encouraging participation in the full breadth of activities. • Committing to having food available at an event can be challenging when event attendance is uncertain, as much as possible ensure that everyone has a chance to eat.

Engagement Stations

- A welcome booth was helpful for greeting attendees and introducing them to the various areas they could visit and how they should navigate the engagement stations.
- Stations are useful mechanisms to structure community member feedback around specific questions and can provide interesting and or unique ways for community members to respond (e.g., sticky notes, voting with physical tokens).
- Engagement stations are 'fun' ways for community members to have their say, provided they are designed in interactive ways and address topics that are of interest to event participants.
- Engagement stations can create choke points if multiple attendees show up to the station at the same time. It's important to have event volunteers supporting the stations to encourage thoughtful but timely completion of station activities.
- Providing written instructions or context in English only may create an unnecessary barrier for some participants. Similarly, question wording or concepts may be abstract or ambiguously interpreted. It's important to have event volunteers available at stations to guide participants, as well as pictorial cues to provide additional context were appropriate.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Don't Lose the Dialogue: Large events create energy and excitement, but there still needs to be time for in-depth and meaningful discussion to avoid leaving questions unanswered and voices unheard. Ensure the event plan includes the time and mechanisms necessary to capture community member feedback.

- The more time it takes a community member to provide their feedback, the less time they will have for other engagement activities. There is a balance between thoughtful reflection and contribution and providing opportunities for everyone to be heard.
- Having note takers and video recordings are valuable ways to ensure verbal feedback and observations aren't lost.

2 Leverage Community Networks: Engagement is easier when you work with individuals or organizations who are already connected to the community. When starting an engagement event, identify key players and networks within the community and work with them to engage a broader audience. Personal and professional connections are extremely useful when relying on targeted outreach as part of an engagement strategy.

3 Maintain Relationships: Some community members may be interested in the project beyond participation in a single event. Ensure there are opportunities to engage and inform the individuals you engage beyond a single point in time.

- Start a formal contact list for people/organizations open to getting information about the project and any future engagements.
- Leverage digital/social media assets

to keep the project 'alive', share small learnings to-date, and communicate upcoming opportunities.

- Identify key individuals for potential follow-up with subsequent engagement activities (e.g., interviews).

4 Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities:

Community engagement initiatives may involve loose networks of collaborators including volunteers, non-profits, community organizations, consultants, and City departments. Memorandums of understanding or terms of reference should be established early on to help all project partners understand the project's purpose and their commitment to it, including engagement, time, resources, and deliverables.

5 Incorporate Joyful Give Back: Community events provide an opportunity to give back to community members through entertainment, social connection, and education. Individuals will be drawn to an event, and subsequent events, when they experience the moments of joy giving back can provide.

- Diverse communities may experience joy and entertainment in different ways however, gathering around food has universal appeal.
- Events should be structured to provide opportunities for learning about the issues being discussed, as much as they are about providing input.
- The results of the event should be shared with the people who helped generate them through whatever mechanisms are most appropriate (e.g., newsletters, social media, follow up events.).

6 Inclusivity and Accessibility are Fundamental: At a public event it can be hard for all individuals to feel like they made meaningful contributions or had the opportunity to be heard. Barriers to participation should be thoughtfully considered and addressed prior to the day of the event so that all contributions are tangible and opportunities for discussion are inclusive.

- Consider providing information that's necessary for participation in multiple formats and/or languages.
- Ensure volunteers are available to facilitate participation when necessary.

7 Expect the Unexpected: When engaging large groups of individuals outside of a tightly managed context, there will always be unexpected reactions and scenarios. It never hurts to have a Plan B and Plan C in the event Plan A doesn't go as planned.

8 Don't Forget the Data: Engagement events are a mechanism for community members to share their knowledge and perspectives in ways that the project team can generate insight from to drive meaningful change. Ensure that in addition to being enjoyable, the activities planned will provide the project team with data to answer meaningful questions.

- Opportunities for engagement should be grounded and practical to the point their purpose is obvious to all participants.
- It can be challenging to compare data across multiple events when it is collected differently – consider longitudinal data management if you plan to do longitudinal engagement.
- Collecting data shouldn't create a barrier to participation, not every attendee will fill out a pre-registration form or take

the time to complete an activity and that's okay, the data you do collect is still valuable even if it's not 'perfect'.

9 Commit to Showing Up: When planning engagement events, it's important that the project team is as engaged as they are asking the community to be. Everyone who is involved in a community initiative needs to put skin in the game show up as part of building trust with the community.

10 Follow Up: Community engagement events can create as many questions as they answer. As part of overall project planning, opportunities to follow up with event community members should be anticipated to continue exploration of key topics and perspectives.



COMMUNITY ADVOCATE TOOLKIT



INTRO TO THE TOOLKIT

Outdoor public space projects don't come with a manual documenting every step or requirement that will guarantee success. Different projects require different partnerships, have different funding and permitting requirements, and engage community in different ways. However, there are a general set of activities or steps that most projects go through; this section of the report provides guidance and resources to assist community advocates in successfully navigating these steps. This content is a synthesis of insights from subject matter experts, including community advocates who have successfully completed projects of their own, and City officials and employees who support the process for developing and enhancing outdoor public spaces.

The CA Journey diagram offers a high level, one page summary of the overall process. Subsequent sections go into additional detail on each activity including:

- **Purpose:** The general purpose and intended outcome for this part of the process.
- **Recommendations:** Advice and guidance from subject matter experts aimed at supporting community advocates to lead a successful project.
- **Common Challenges:** Common challenges that can be anticipated during this part of the process and suggestions for overcoming them.
- **Key Partners:** Individuals or organizations that play a role in this part of the process.
- **Resources:** Documentation and information to support a community advocate in successfully completing project activities.

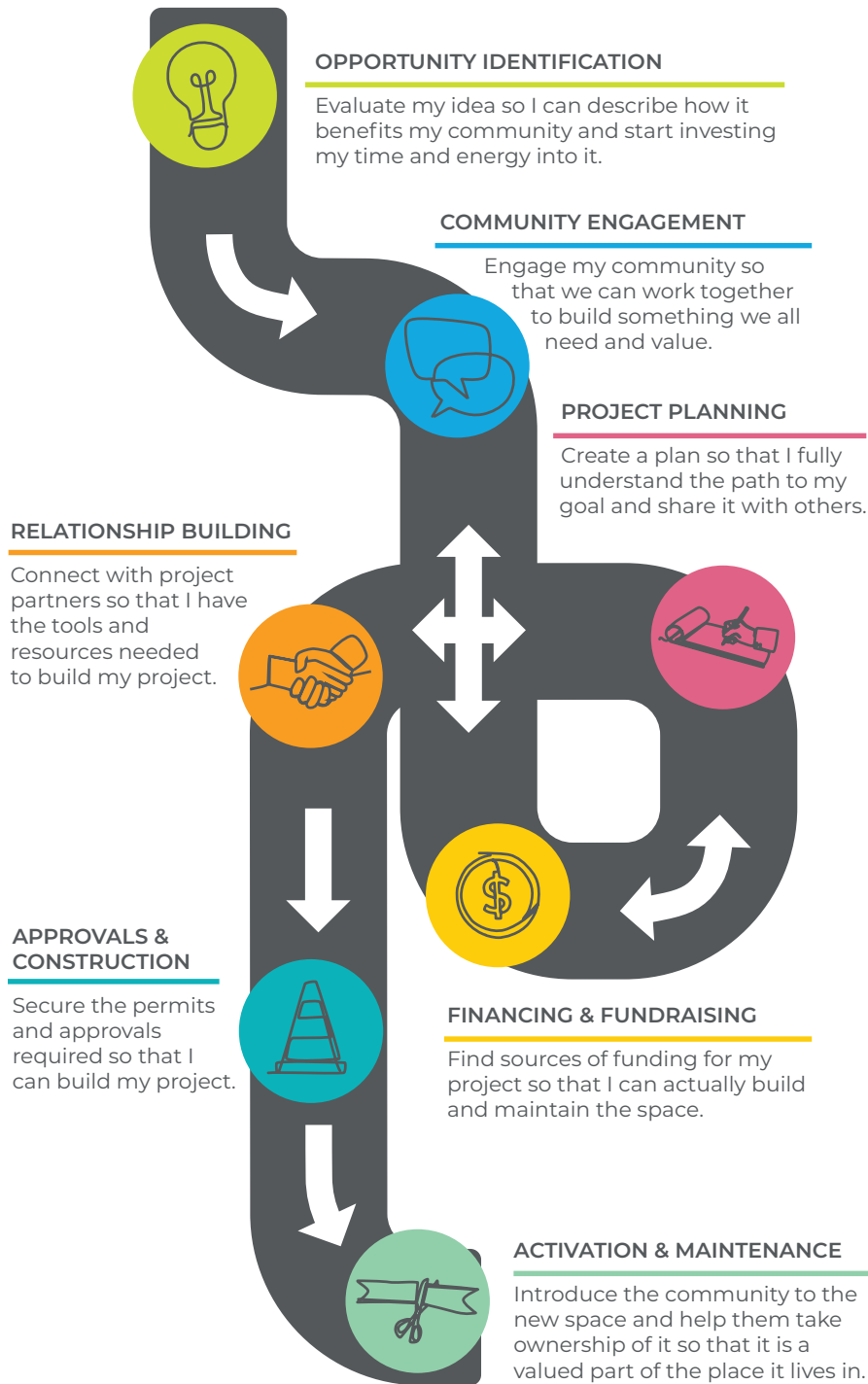
Additional context for some unique types of spaces or projects (e.g., projects involving school boards or homeowners' associations, or urban agriculture or art installation projects) is provided towards the end of the toolkit (Resources for Specific Types of Spaces).

Make sure you also review the Parks Foundation's Community Projects 101. This document is an additional resource that compliments the Community Advocate Tool Kit and serves as a great resource to support any outdoor public space project.



Community Advocate

THE COMMUNITY ADVOCATE JOURNEY



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Define the need for the project within your community.
- Be prepared to take on a long-term volunteer project.
- View the City of Calgary map of existing park spaces.
- Identify community members willing to support the project.
- Spread the word about your project.
- Obtain letters of support and signatures from supporters.
- Define what you want and why, and the partners you need.
- Create design drawings or concept sketches to share your vision.
- Be prepared to adapt your plan with the feedback you receive.
- Connect with your Community Association, Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist, Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator, and the Parks Foundation.
- Identify a fiscal partner and legal entity to represent the project.
- Determine the funding the City has available and what you'll need to fundraise.
- Partner with a Community Association or a non-profit to access fundraising and grant opportunities.
- Work with your Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist and Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator to navigate City requirements and processes.
- Finalize the construction plan and schedule, support as necessary.
- Plan an opening event to engage your community members and energize the space.
- Share your story through community newsletters, social media and your partner networks.



OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION

An outdoor public space project begins when an individual sees an opportunity to improve their community by creating or enhancing a community space. This opportunity, big or small, represents an outdoor public space project and the first step an individual takes in their journey as a community advocate! The opportunity is often triggered by:

- **Public Notices:** The City of Calgary, often through community associations, will post public notices either digitally or physically to inform community members about changes coming to community spaces (e.g., life cycling existing outdoor public spaces). These notices typically provide general information about the change and solicit community member feedback on how spaces are currently being used and what value they provide.
- **Direct Experience of Need:** Community members may be familiar with a distinct need their community is experiencing. For example, a member of a recreational group may experience a gap in the availability of outdoor public spaces to support their recreational community (e.g., cricket fields or pump tracks) or may identify existing infrastructure in need of maintenance and repair.



If it takes you 5 years to get to the point where we have your vision, that's OK! It doesn't have to be done in one year, or two years, or whatever.

-Community Advocate

Purpose

The primary purpose of opportunity identification is for the community advocate to consider:

- Whether the project serves an unmet need and provides value for the community.
- Whether they are prepared to commit their own time and effort to leading the project.



Recommendations

Demonstrate the Project Meets a Community Need

A community advocate must be able to demonstrate that there is a need and a desire for the project that is not already being met by other outdoor public spaces and infrastructure.

- Community advocates can explore nearby community spaces physically, or virtually using a tool like Google Maps or the [City of Calgary's Parks Wayfinder Map](#). This exploration will allow the community advocate to articulate how their project meets a need that is currently unmet by the existing public spaces and infrastructure in their community.
- Discussing the project with other community members, the community association or the City via 311 can be an effective way to evaluate whether a project serves an unmet need. Support or validation from other individuals and organizations is a positive sign that the initiative can succeed.

Define the Impacted Community Groups

The community member should begin thinking about how the project will impact the community, and how this impact may be defined relative to:

- Who in the community could benefit from the project (e.g., parents with children will benefit from the construction of a playground); or
- Who in the community could be disrupted by the project (e.g., individuals within 'line of sight' to the project location).

Consider the Level of Commitment

Outdoor public space projects range from small enhancements (e.g., adding a park bench to an existing space) to large construction projects (e.g., building a new playground). Community advocates should reflect on their capacity to manage the project from start to finish.

- Consideration should be given to the scale of the project and the time commitment the community advocate can make as some projects may take considerable time and engagement efforts to implement.

- Outdoor public space projects can require a diverse team and skill set, including project management, grant writing, community engagement, administration, risk and liability management, landscape design and site planning. The community advocate may bring their own skills to the project, but more than likely they will be working with a team to provide the necessary subject matter expertise to see the project through. The community advocate should consider what they are bringing to the project and what they will be looking for in their team.



If you aren't sure that you want to do this for the next three to four years, a real part time job, like 30 hours, then don't do it. Just activate a space that's already there. That's what I would have done. If I can go back in time, I would have, yeah, probably let them take that playground or said yeah, OK, a \$40,000 playground is fine. And then put that effort into starting the events committee that we have now.

-Community Advocate

Make Sure it's a Project not a Service Request

There are several services that the City of Calgary offers for free once they are aware of an issue or a community request. Community advocates can ensure their project is actually a project and not a service request by calling 311 or searching the [311 Online Services Citizen Web Portal](#).

- Services requests may include:
 - Park Lighting: reporting lighting concerns in City parks.
 - Park Structure Repairs: requesting maintenance or repairs to structures within a park.
 - Park Watering Inquires: reporting irrigation issues in a park.

- **Pathway Concerns:** requesting maintenance to address issues such as debris, pathway signs, tree roots, potholes, gravel, etc., on shared pathways or trails.
- **Sidewalk or Curb Repairs:** requesting repairs to public sidewalks, curbs or gutters.
- **Trees:** Requesting any maintenance related to City owned trees.
- **Wheelchair Ramp Request:** requesting new wheelchair ramps.



I mean, those are the people who you have, you know, connections with for the rest of your life, or who have made a difference in your life, right, And left you with good memories, right? That's how communities are built. Always have been. And that's how you know, great things happen.

-Community Advocate

Potential Challenges

During the early stages of a potential project, it's not uncommon for community advocates to have to manage or overcome the following issues:

- **Conflicting Interests:** The community advocate may receive a mix of support and criticism as they begin to discuss the project opportunity. These projects involve public spaces and their impact or value is viewed from a variety of perspectives. Consider incorporating critical feedback into the project as a means to enhance it and help serve a broader segment of the community. If critical feedback or opposition to a project isn't constructive, look to other individuals and organizations from the community for support. Unless the proposed space is unique enough to satisfy a need or desire in the community that is not already being met,

it will be challenging to gain support and funding to get the project off the ground.

- **Volunteer Management:** There are a limited number of volunteers available to support a project within any community, and there are many competing demands for volunteer time. The community advocate may require volunteer support through all phases of the project, but volunteers often come and go as their priorities and obligations change. During Opportunity Identification, community advocates can start planning a volunteer engagement strategy and identifying individuals who are willing to support the project in whatever capacity they can.

Key Partners

- **Community Associations:** The community advocate can reach out to their community association and identify the best point of contact to discuss their project. Community associations may have websites, newsletters, or physical buildings which can provide avenues for making contact and finding the right person to talk to. The City will typically ask for confirmation that the community association is supporting the project.
- **Community Interest Groups:** The outdoor public space project may be of particular interest to a specific group or association within the community (e.g., recreational groups, cultural associations). It can be valuable to identify these groups early on to validate the idea with a group of people who will benefit from it.
- **The Parks Foundation:** The community advocate can contact the Parks Foundation to discuss the project early on and get additional advice on how to best proceed.
- **311:** Calling 311 is an easy way to determine if a project could be a service request. In addition, 311 can be a valuable resource to identify if there are any proposed projects coming to the community that meet the same need as the proposed project.

Resources



[Community Involvement Toolkit](#)

City of Calgary

This website provides information and resources to help community groups better understand and participate in community outreach processes associated with development, land use and planning policy projects happening in our city.



[Current City Led Projects](#)

City of Calgary

A list of planning and development projects occurring throughout the city. This information provides advocates with more context on the larger planning and development initiatives occurring within a community.



[City of Calgary Parks Information, Maps and Programs](#)

City of Calgary

Information and resources regarding the City of Calgary Parks, including maps, programs, space bookings, and general information for Calgary residents.



[City of Calgary Open Space Plan](#)

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary's website describing their plan for open space development and associated resources.



[City of Calgary Parks and Recreation Maps](#)

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary hosts various interactive maps enabling community advocates to look into existing public spaces and put their initiative in the context of the communities they are planning to work in.



[Playground Optimization Considerations](#)

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary has a Playground Optimization Program, this site provides valuable context on the playground life cycling process and approach.



[Inspection and Maintenance Program for Play Spaces](#)

Alberta Health Services

This checklist from AHS provides an unbiased perspective for Community Advocates who want to evaluate the current condition of existing play spaces which may require maintenance.



[Creating Coventry Community-Driven Plan](#)

Creating Coventry

A community-driven initiative providing a road-map toward better park spaces in Coventry Hills. The information available on this partner site can serve as inspiration and guidance for similar future initiatives.



[Calgary Parks with Fitness Equipment](#)

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary provides a list of parks with fitness equipment for community members and advocates interested in seeing where this infrastructure is currently available.



[City of Calgary ELM Program](#)

City of Calgary

Projects focused on enhancing community green spaces may fit within the City of Calgary's Enhanced Landscape Maintenance program.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement begins alongside Opportunity Identification as the community advocate begins to discuss their project with other members of the community. This step provides an opportunity to get a sense of the community's perceptions of the proposed project. Community support for a project is essential because community members can provide (or withhold) volunteer hours, donations, and expressions of support that will be necessary for the success of the project.

Purpose

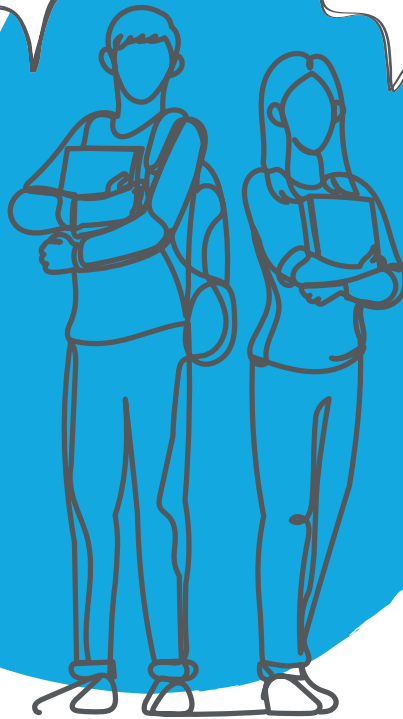
The primary purpose of community engagement is for the community advocate to:

- Solicit feedback from the community to refine the proposed outdoor public space concept to increase its chances of success.
- Evaluate the level of support the community is willing to provide for the project.

There's value in the community. We don't want to skip this step [engagement] because there could be a relationship that, you know, we didn't know about just from looking at Google Maps.

And then because you've [engaged the community] you have better community buy in and outcomes tend to be better and more people are interested and on and on.

Community Advocate

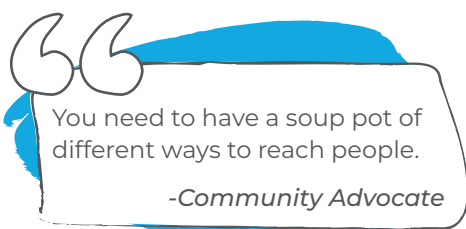


Recommendations

Develop a Project Summary

The advocate should be able to summarize their project with a short description or 'elevator pitch' that will allow them to communicate it more effectively during community engagement. This pitch could include:

- A description of what is being proposed and where will it be.
- A value proposition to define the need or benefit for the community.
- Visuals (e.g., concept diagrams, community maps) to more easily communicate what the project is.



Explore Multiple Engagement Methods

The advocate will need to determine the platforms they will use for engagement. These could be digital, physical, passive, active, in-person or remote. Examples include surveys, petitions, events and meetings, informal conversations, community signage, social media, community town-halls, door knocking or simply showing up in public spaces to meet people. There is no 'best' approach, and the advocate will need to explore multiple engagement methods.

Adopt a Collaborative Mindset

Successful engagement should be authentic and honor the input and time of the people being engaged. Going into community engagement with a collaborative mindset will help set a community advocate up for success. Some tips and tricks to support this approach:

- **Co-Create:** Welcome input, feedback, and

participation from the community members. The people who live, work, and play nearby are local experts with knowledge and ideas that can improve the concept. For instance, someone who lives on a property next to the targeted space may know that the area floods every spring. By opening up the doors to co-creation, a grassroots initiative also opens itself up to relationships and collaborations. A network of partners and collaborators is a huge factor in the success of a community project.

- **Keep Track of Feedback:** Community engagement is hard work. To make sure the effort isn't wasted, community advocates should keep track of their learnings so that they aren't forgotten, and so that they can be shared with the project team as it grows. The efforts made to gather data about what the community's needs and values are should be used to continually inform the project. In addition, letters of support from community groups and members will be valuable later on in the project when applying for grants and demonstrating support exists.
- **Circle Back:** Community engagement should be revisited throughout the planning stages of the project, especially as an initiative gains momentum, becomes better defined, or changes direction. Remember to circle back with the people who have provided input (if they indicated a genuine interest) to keep them engaged and honor their feedback.



Engage Broadly

Keep track of who you are engaging so you can better target the people who you haven't heard from yet. The more broadly your engagement strategy reflects the demographics (e.g., age, ethnicity) and interests (e.g., social connection, physical activity) of your community, the more successful the project will be.

Build a Team

Start recruiting volunteers as early as possible, this will help distribute the effort associated with leading an outdoor public space project. In addition, if a community advocate finds it impossible to recruit volunteers, it is a possible sign that the project will struggle to go further.



Part of the reason why people don't want to do that work is because it exposes the weaknesses in their plans ... If you can stomach that, especially for a project that has some kind of scale or something that's different, then you know you can get a lot of interesting feedback that way.

-Community Advocate

Common Challenges

Common challenges or barriers the community advocate will have to consider and potentially overcome include:

- **Limited Engagement:** Community engagement can indicate whether or not there is a critical mass of support to move the project along. If there isn't a strong enough indication of support for the project, it will likely be a significant challenge to recruit volunteers and fundraise for the project. However, engagement is difficult work and it is not uncommon for advocates to struggle

finding members of their community willing to engage. Some suggestions from previous advocates to support engagement included:

- Use visuals to convey your ideas, a picture is worth a thousand words and being able to show community members what the project is intended to be is much more engaging than simply describing it.
- Go to where impacted community members will be, don't expect the community to come to you, but if you want to draw attention offer free food.
- Vary the days and times of day that you try to engage people; not everyone works on weekdays from 9:00-5:00.
- Find ways to get kids and families involved through clubs, camps and sports.
- Rent and post a temporary community sign
- Use social media to reach out to local community groups.
- Engage local organizations and businesses, share your message in newsletters and on local bulletin boards.
- If you're looking to engage with schools, try reaching out to the principal and/or parent council first.
- **Limited Budget:** Early on in a project there's often little funding to support community engagement activities (e.g., renting signs, hosting events, creating concept diagrams). If there are no financial resources available at this stage, the budget is the total number of hours or dollars that a community advocate has of their own to contribute. Encountering budget limitations can also be a signal that it is time to consider investing time into the Financial Planning and Fundraising stage of the project.

Key Partners

Community Associations: If the community association hasn't already been engaged, they are a key organization to include during the engagement process.

Community Members: Discussing the project with other members of the community (e.g., neighbours, frequent users of existing spaces) is an incredibly valuable part of community engagement.

Community Organizations: The community advocate should think about the organizations within their community that could be engaged (e.g., businesses, school groups, cultural associations, churches, clubs and sports teams).



The best preparation that groups can do is say, hey, we've got this idea. We've vetted it. We've done some door knocking and everyone loves it. And then we're like great, OK that that de-risks that component of it quite substantially.

-City Employee

Resources



Community Outreach Toolkits

The City of Calgary

The City of Calgary provides a Community Outreach Toolkit for anyone interested in or involved in community outreach as part of the planning and developing process. Community Advocates may be interested in reviewing the toolkit to find strategies and tips for how to engage their community in their proposed idea.



Understanding HOAs, RAs and Community Associations

The Calgary Herald

An article from the Calgary Herald discussing the differences between Home Owners' Associations, Residents' Associations and Community Associations which provides community advocates valuable perspective when understanding how the associations within their community are structured to support them.



Advertising on Calgary Public Transit

Calgary Transit

Advertising options are available through Calgary Transit, including Digital and printed ads located inside or outside of vehicles and CTrains, bus benches, and passenger shelter stations. However, this approach is costly and is not likely accessible to the majority of grassroots initiatives.




PROJECT PLANNING

Project planning is critical to the success of an outdoor public space project, but the plan doesn't need to be completed all at once and it isn't written in stone. This step will start as soon as the community advocate begins to describe their project vision, and will be revisited continually as new information, requirements, and partners arise. The plan serves as a record of the community advocate's approach to the project, helps keep things moving forward, and provides a common point of reference to share with partners and collaborators.

Purpose

The primary purpose of project planning is to document and describe:

- Who the project benefits and who needs to be involved.
- What the project is and what it will require to be successful.
- Where the project will or could be built/enhanced/activated.
- When project milestones or key dates are.
- Why the project is important to the advocate and community.
- How the project will be accomplished and funded.



Projects will survive or fail based on preparation. And so in order for key influencers to be involved, or want to get on board, they need, they want to know how successful can the project be, right. And so that's why I had prepared the business plan to be able to bring it to them to say these are the things that we'll be doing, this is the approach we'll be taking and this is who's involved yet right now, right.

Community Advocate

Recommendations

Describe Where the Project Will Be

The project might be intended to be built or activated in a specific location (e.g., a vacant lot) but the advocate should also consider characteristics of the proposed space (e.g., necessary square footage, proximity to existing amenities, land use qualifications). It can be valuable to adopt a flexible approach when it comes to a project's location to open up new opportunities and respond to potential project constraints.

Describe the Project Beneficiaries and Partners

Document who the proposed space will benefit, the demographics and characteristics of the people using it and their needs and values. By considering characteristics of the people who will enjoy this space, the team can better design a space that will benefit all potential community members. In addition to who the project helps, start thinking about who will help the project. Create a list of the people, roles and skill sets that will be important to the project.

Describe The Project and its Requirements

Document what is actually being proposed and what the project's goal is. By writing down the end goal in a concrete and descriptive manner, the community advocate can share their vision with others and ensure that everyone is "on the same page". This description should also include requirements for the project to be successful (e.g., permits, funding).

Describe the Importance of the Project

The community advocate should define why the project is important to the community it will benefit. This benefit can be iterated and enhanced community engagement may identify additional benefits or stories of potential impact. The advocate may also want to include tangible reasons why they are passionate about the project to serve as a set of core values; this can be used to evaluate the impact of potential changes or modifications to the plan.

Describe the Timelines

Community projects can take a few months or a few years. The timeline will be dependent on the project, but it is worth considering important milestones (e.g., permit applications and City approvals, grant application deadlines) and the impact timelines could have on a project. For example, a longer project might have more turnover in the volunteer committee but also provide more time for fundraising. In addition, the community advocate may want to consider if they are willing to commit the time to a project that will span multiple years. A project will more often than not experience delays and it is worth adding contingencies to project timelines to account for this.



Think about your project from a 360 perspective, you break it down into elements and you understand what elements do you need for financial support? What elements do you have for in kind support? What elements do you need for volunteer support? And then start identifying those out within the community...

-Community Advocate

Plan to be Adaptable

The project plan doesn't need to be built all at once, the community advocate should start by documenting the detail and information currently available at the start of the project, and allow the plan to evolve and grow over time. New project partners and new project requirements will provide opportunities to build out a plan in more detail as the project progresses; if at some point the plan is missing something critical to proceed, that represents an opportunity to enhance it.



If an organization goes under, if they can't pay, they can't fund to operate that rink anymore - because it costs a lot of money to have these things - we get it back. The City of Calgary gets it back. And it would come into our inventory and frankly, we don't want it.

-City Employee

excel at things like formalizing project plan documents or writing grant applications.

- Partner Liaison: Having one point of contact for communications with partners (i.e., Parks Foundation, the City of Calgary) helps to clarify who is responsible for replying to any emails or requests for information. Often this role is filled by the project lead.



You have to keep pushing until you get where you're going.

-Community Advocate

Consider Key Roles

Even if the community advocate is capable of volunteering full time hours to their initiative, one person isn't enough. There are many different aspects of managing the project, and each is well-suited to people with certain strengths and personality types. Some of the different roles, and personality types to fit them, include:

- **Project Lead:** Having one or two individuals who have the authority to make decisions and resolve disputes is effective for moving a project forward. These people are comfortable taking responsibility, making decisions, and leading group discussions.
- **Community Engagement Lead:** Some people, particularly extroverts, excel at being out in the community, initiating conversations with strangers to gain feedback. The ability to empathize and listen is key.
- **Logistics:** Some people don't like going out and talking to strangers but are perfectly happy to track things in spreadsheets. They can track things like grant application deadlines, budgets, or ordering supplies. They can also keep a record of community feedback and engagement activities.
- **Writers:** Some people enjoy writing, and

Common Challenges

- **Hearing No:** As the community advocate progresses the plan, they may receive feedback that certain aspects of the plan are not possible or unlikely to be approved. This feedback can be based on actual legal or liability considerations, but it can also be opinion based. What's important for any advocate is to learn to handle and adapt their plan in response to hearing No. Once the reason behind a No is understood, it's often possible for an advocate to adapt the plan to achieve the same or a similar result. Maintenance and Optional Amenities Agreements may be required to allow non-standard installations.
- **Project Governance:** Community led projects don't have a standardized governance structure. The individuals involved and their roles and responsibilities are compiled by the advocate on an ad hoc basis, and there is no true 'accountability' structure. That said, every project is built around a team of individuals and organizations that have a proposed role. Coordinating a project that involves a large number of volunteers, non-profit organizations, and municipal departments

is no small undertaking. It can be helpful to create a document that formalizes the roles and responsibilities within a volunteer group to help create a communal sense of ownership over the initiative. It also helps to predict and mitigate any challenges that may come up with volunteers who have other demands on their time and may be unable to commit to certain roles or responsibilities.

- **Legal Partnership Requirements:** Most outdoor public space projects will require partnership with a legal entity, that is able to represent the project's interests on formal agreements (e.g., License of Occupations with the City of Calgary), manage project finances (e.g., provide accounts to hold fund-raising dollars) and manage liability (e.g., provide insurance for events and volunteers). The City's intended partner in this regard is the Community Association. In some instances, the association is unwilling or unable to support the project, which can become a significant challenge for the project and the advocate. The path forward will either require convincing the community association (e.g., demonstrating strong community support, reducing the financial or administrative ask to the association), or identifying alternate partners (e.g., other societies or non-profits, Parks Foundation)



And the other last point I'll make is have everyone sign a project charter, the key people involved, get them to sign a project charter so everyone fully understands and they've committed to their roles and responsibilities.

-Community Advocate

Key Partners

Project Planning will involve multiple partners, from volunteers supporting the project to City Employees involved in approvals and permitting. Which partners are the most important to the project will depend on the phase the project is in. The following table describes a series of project activities the community advocate should plan for, along with potential partners that may support that activity. Different projects may vary in terms of what activities are required and the sequence they need to be completed in, but this list can be considered a reasonable starting point to get a sense of the work that will be needed for a outdoor public space project and the partners that could support.

Key Partners

ACTIVITY	PARTNERS TO CONSIDER
<p>Assemble a team: Recruit volunteers and make connections with key partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Community Association (or Residents' Association) can connect you with like-minded people in your community. • Local interest groups
<p>Create a project charter: Document roles and responsibilities for the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the newly formed team of community volunteers
<p>Partner with a legal entity: Identify the legal entity (Community Association, non-profit or society) to act as the legal entity representing the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community or Home Owners' Association • Local charities or societies • Parent Council (if project is on school property)
<p>Create a project budget: Link project requirements to costs, some may be covered in-kind whereas others will require actual dollars.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Calgary Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist
<p>Fundraise: Identify potential funding sources and create a plan to pursue them (see Financing and Fundraising Section).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal entity partner • Parks Foundation • Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator • Volunteers
<p>Design the space: Work with a landscape architect and/or potential vendors to design the proposed space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape architects • Equipment vendors • Construction contractors • Parks Foundation (including financial support through the Stella Conceptual Drawing Grant)
<p>Demonstrate support: Obtain letters of support and a sight line survey to demonstrate the project has buy-in from the community and key partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal entity partner • Community Association • Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist
<p>Obtain proof of insurance: Collaborate with the legal entity partner to address any insurance requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal entity partner
<p>Create a land lease agreement: If necessary, work with the NPC and legal entity partner for any lease or license of occupation agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator

ACTIVITY	PARTNERS TO CONSIDER
<p>Request for Proposals (RFPs): Get estimates for the work and or equipment needed. It may be necessary to issue a RFP to potential contractors and vendors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community volunteers • Parks Foundation
<p>Permits and Approvals: On an as needed basis, complete the requirements for any necessary permits and approvals including Historical Resource Assessment (HRA), Drawing review, Building Permits (BP), Environmental Review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator • City of Calgary Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist • Landscape Architect
<p>Finalize construction and schedule: Once the project is approved and vendors have been selected, construction can begin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator • Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist • Landscape Architect
<p>Activate the space: Consider hosting an event to welcome the community to the new space. Share stories with the community about the project's success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community volunteers • Legal entity partner
<p>Maintain the space: Any ongoing maintenance that is required, which is not managed by the City, will need to be coordinated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community volunteers

Resources



Community Projects 101

Parks Foundation

A guide for community led projects in Calgary, including Visioning and Engagement, Planning and Partnerships, Funding, Building, and a compilation of toolkits and resources. This is a fundamental resource for community advocates.



Community Profiles

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary provides this resource that provides valuable information pertaining to community demographics.



Community Playground Workbook

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary provides this resource to guide community advocates through the process of developing or enhancing a community playground, including resources and checklists.



Inspiring Neighbourhoods Grant Tip Sheet

City of Calgary

The City of Calgary provides this resource in relation to the Inspiring Neighbourhoods Grant. However, it discusses factors to incorporate into the planning for outdoor public space projects generally.



RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Developing Project relationships is an ongoing activity that is critical to any successful outdoor public space project. When and how a community advocate engages specific individuals or organizations is largely in response to identifying the need to do so, but often a project need or requirement is identified that is outside the scope or capability of the community advocate, which triggers the need to broaden their team. There are multiple parties and partners that will be involved in bringing an outdoor public space project to life. Many of these are listed in Calgary's Outdoor Public Spaces, and are elaborated on in more detail here.

Purpose

The primary purpose of developing project relationships is to:

- Identify and make connections with individuals and organizations who will provide support for the project (e.g., through volunteers, resources, legal agency, or networks).
- Share the impact and story of the project with a broader group of individuals and organizations.

Before approaching any potential partner, know why they would say yes or no and have your information ready and available for them... if you get them early on and you show how organized you are and you show them why it's going to be valuable to them. I've done sponsorship for probably 20 years or more and you know when you show them why and you help them understand the value. It's been very rare that someone has not become involved on some level.



Recommendations

- **Research Potential Partners Ahead of Time:** By researching the organizations and individuals that could be involved in a project, a community advocate will be better positioned to develop a relationship with them based on their mandate and capabilities. Before reaching out to a potential project partner, it is worth taking the time to understand what their role or level of support could be in the project so there is a clear ask that is well aligned with the partner's interests.
- **Consider a Variety of Partners and Purposes:** Local businesses, church groups, schools, and other interest groups or organizations can be valuable partners to grassroots organizations. Apart from asking for financial support, advocates should consider other means of support including in-kind donations or mutually beneficial exchanges. For instance, weeding or gardening activities can offer a learning opportunity for local students, and provide extra sets of hands for a community garden initiative. Local colleges or schools that teach carpentry or other small construction activities can also lend creative solutions to a project.



We looked at doing the nonprofit thing and I think it was \$3,000 or so just to kind of register it, and then you have to have audited financials every year... and we were like, this sounds like a lot of work. And if we put the work into becoming a charity or nonprofit, all of our effort would be towards the red tape aspect of that... I don't think that we would have any ambition left over.

-Community Advocate

Common Challenges

- **Distributed Roles:** There are many affected parties who will need to be involved in the process, including those involved in various City of Calgary departments (e.g., Parks & Open Spaces, Partnerships, Mobility, Utilities Delivery, Climate and Environment, Real Estate & Development Services), local property owners, construction and design contractors, insurance providers, local community or interest groups, and financiers. Each party will have their own needs, goals, and requirements, and may present obstacles to a project.
- **Catch 22s:** It's not uncommon for a partner organization to get involved at a certain 'stage' of a project or once a threshold for project maturity has been demonstrated, while simultaneously being seen as necessary to move the project along. This is often seen as a Catch 22, where the partnership or activity required at a specific stage of a project requires that stage to be completed prior to getting involved.
- **Community Association Capacity:** Community Associations vary in their capacity to support projects, both financially and in the availability of volunteers. In addition, some newer communities have not yet formed Community Associations, or have a Homeowners' Association instead. If a community advocate is planning a project in an area where the Community Association isn't well positioned to assist the project, it may be necessary to partner with a different not-for-profit, charity, or society. For a list of Calgary organizations and societies to explore, see pages 23-25 of the "[Breaking Ground Calgary Toolkit](#)".

Key Partners

- **Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators (NPCs):** NPCs are City staff dedicated to supporting community associations and social recreation groups to improve neighbourhoods. In most instances, the NPC will work with the community advocate through their community association to navigate City requirements and processes.
- **Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategists:** Community Strategists are City Staff who advocate for people who want to improve and connect with outdoor public spaces. They act as a portal into the City's processes, and act as a communicator and facilitator between different City departments. Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategists are essential for helping assess the feasibility of a project and can set expectations around what is feasible.
- **Community Associations:** Community associations can be found in nearly every neighbourhood in Calgary. They are volunteer run and have a general mission to provide programs and services for the community, and act as a central point for communication between the City and community members. They are legal entities, and the City of Calgary's preferred partner organization for grassroots organizations. Community Associations can:
 - Access specific municipal communication channels.
 - Provide access to funding sources that are exclusive to not-for-profit organizations such as casino fundraising through AGLC, and grant applications that require the applicant to be a registered legal entity.
 - Provide insurance for project builds and activation activities.
 - Hold a Land Lease or License of Occupation.
- **Parks Foundation:** Parks Foundation is non-profit organization, and qualified donee, that collaborates with community groups, school groups, and sport organizations to support the

development and enhancement of outdoor public spaces. Their support is free with a Parks Foundation account and is provided through:

- Accounting services, including accepting donations on behalf of the community project and issuing tax receipts for eligible donations.
- Networking with other project partners and knowledge of funding opportunities.
- Offering a variety of grant programs, including:
 - Stella Conceptual Drawing Grant Program, providing seed money to hire a landscape architect to develop a concept drawing for the project,
 - Amateur Sport Grant Program,
 - Building Communities Grant.
- Free fundraising support via a Parks Foundation project account.

Parks foundation also offers varying levels of project management support for specific projects, ranging from offering advice when community advocates run into issues, to taking on full project management responsibility and accountability for a 5% fee.



It's a lot of different pieces, but you need all of them to make it work. And we're not all good at all of those pieces... You can't rely on just one person to make things happen.

-Community Advocate

Resources



The Federation of Calgary Communities

The Federation of Calgary Communities is the largest volunteer movement in the city, working to support board members and volunteers who help improve neighborhood life. They provide support and resources in volunteer engagement, community building, governance, political advocacy, fund development, and financial literacy to members.



The Parks Foundation

A first point of contact for assessing the feasibility of a project and subsequently liaising with City departments to make sure requirements are met.



City Councilors of Calgary Wards

The City of Calgary is currently (as of 2023) divided into 14 Wards, each with a Ward Councilor who represents the interests of the residents within their ward. City Council sets policy direction which creates an overarching landscape in which the development of public park spaces occurs, however individual Councilors are not responsible for approving or directing individual projects.



Calgary Parks & Open Spaces

Call 311 or use the 311 App and request to speak to a Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist

Calgary Parks & Open Spaces has a Community Strategist staff member for every Ward in the city. Reach out to the Strategist responsible for your ward.



Community Social Workers

The City of Calgary has Community Social Workers in over 20 neighbourhoods to support residents in finding neighbourhood-based solutions to social issues. They prioritize working with community members who have experienced social and/or economic marginalization.



Neighborhood Partnership Coordinator (NPC)

NPCs support community associations and social recreation groups in areas of lease and license of occupation, organizational development, financial management, facility maintenance and capital construction support, connecting city resources, supporting engagement activities, including guidance in the provision of programs and services.



IntegralOrg

IntegralOrg offers education and support to Alberta nonprofits in governance, strategic planning, legal services, risk management, and more.



Permaculture Calgary Guild

Permaculture Calgary Guild empowers Calgarians to create positive change and resilience in their lives and communities through fostering connections and collaborations, facilitating educational opportunities, innovation, and skill share; and permaculture action, advocacy, and outreach.



City of Calgary 311 Services

311 is a free service provided to the public to access city information and non-emergency related services, including standard requests for repairs and improvements of public areas.



Community Developers

Refer to the Community or Home Owners' association to find the best contact for the community developer

For public space projects in newer or under development communities, the developer who created the community is also a good ally and will often support initiatives to promote healthy and active communities.



FINANCING AND FUNDRAISING

Financing and fundraising is often required in order to cover the costs of developing or activating an outdoor public space. This part of the process typically requires that the community advocate has a general understanding of what the project budget is, as developed through project planning. In addition, financing and fundraising is easier once a relationship has been established with a non-profit partner (e.g., a community association) willing to act as a fiscal agent; this will support the management of the funds being raised and open up more opportunities to grants and fundraising opportunities.

Purpose

The primary purpose of financing and fundraising is to:

- Finance the project so that it can be successfully executed.

Recommendations

- **Getting Started:** The community advocate will need to know what their fundraising target is to develop a financing and fundraising strategy. A valuable first step is to ballpark how much the project will cost. This can be supported by looking up vendor pricing lists, getting quotes from landscape architects or playground equipment suppliers, and talking to organizations and individuals who have experience with similar projects. Ensure the plan includes costs associated with construction, activation and ongoing maintenance when applicable. Having a clear fundraising target coupled with a good description of the project (supported by visuals) will make the fundraising process more effective.

Like 80% of the budget or 70% of the budget came from grants from the government of Alberta, the City of Calgary or private organizations... CFEP was the big one. They're a matching grant. So, we applied for them very last. We had like \$116,000 or \$118,000 and then we applied for them and they matched it!

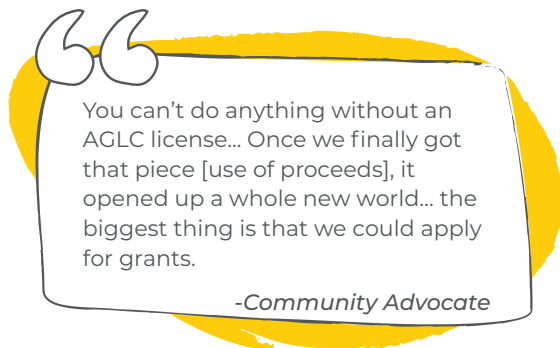
Community Advocate



- **Explore Replacement Costs:** If the outdoor public space project is going to involve replacing infrastructure that is at the end of its life and needs to be replaced, the City of Calgary may provide cash and in-kind resources. This is a potential source of project funding that could offset what is required for additional fundraising efforts.
- **Create a Financial Plan:** The money raised needs to account for all project costs. For some projects, the team will also need to include utility costs (e.g., irrigation or electricity) or budget contingency for potential escalation in construction costs. The Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategist will be able to advise on these requirements.
- **Explore Multiple Options:** There are multiple approaches to fundraising, and all of them should be explored to find the best fit for the project and the team. This includes submitting grant applications, soliciting corporate or private donations, working through Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) for charitable gaming activities, and organizing bottle drives or community-based fundraising.

as materials, food, volunteers, and services). Consider the following organization's ability and interest in supporting the project:

- Schools can provide in-kind support through student opportunities and access to an engaged volunteer base.
- Local businesses are often willing to provide in-kind support for a project in exchange for business exposure and opportunities to give back to their community.
- Local religious or Scouts organizations are often committed to acts of community service and are well organized to organize volunteer opportunities.
- Local photographers, videographers and artists may be willing to support activating spaces and sharing stories back to the broader community.



- **Consider In-Kind Contributions:** Not every potential organization interested in supporting the project will be able to offer cash, but they may be able to offer in-kind donations (such

Common Challenges

- **Limited Fundraising Success:** Community advocates may find it difficult to raise the funds that their project requires. This could be due to limited community engagement, low success rates on grant applications, or the inability to pursue funding opportunities without the right project partners. There can also be competition between community initiatives for finite resources. This is not at all uncommon challenge and one of the only ways to overcome it is persistence and continued commitment to the project. This may involve altering project timelines to allow more time to find the right partners and right funding opportunities.
- **External Financial Realities:** The availability of funds and donations for an outdoor public space project can be influenced by factors completely out of the community advocate's control. Things like global pandemics, inflation, trade agreements, or interest rates, to name a few, are all external factors which can contribute to limited fundraising success. In addition, community demographics play a role in how successful local fundraising can be.

Key Partners

- **Community Associations:** Partnering with a community association (or other non-profit organization) to act as a fiscal agent for the project opens up additional fundraising opportunities and is one of the most effective ways to increase fundraising potential.
- **Volunteer Groups:** Fundraising can be laborious and time consuming; having a strong volunteer base will help alleviate some of this effort from the community advocate. Consider engaging the local community groups that will benefit from the space to support volunteer efforts.
- **Parks Foundation:** Partnering with the Parks Foundation can improve fundraising success by providing grants, contacts and knowledge of fundraising opportunities, and general fundraising support.



The City of Calgary has things that are within their desired specification, so they're gonna have items that they support and their parks teams will maintain and everything is as they would like. If you choose to put in an amenity outside of the City specification, this could be like a decorative piece of stone as a nice entrance into your park, or this could be an amenity like a fire pit, or a gathering space. This could be a bench that is more artistic than a standard park bench. These are things and examples of optional amenities, and when you put those in your detailed design, the city forces you into an optional amenity agreement.

-Developer

Resources



[AGLC Charitable Gaming Information](#)

This site provides more information about how the AGLC supports charitable gaming in Alberta. Community advocates interested in exploring this opportunity (e.g., Casino fundraisers) should review this information.



[Federation of Calgary Communities ActivateYYC](#)

ActivateYYC is micro grant program to fund initiatives aimed at transforming spaces to promote movement, safety, and neighbourliness.



[City of Calgary Inspiring Neighbourhoods Grant](#)

The ING grant is designed to fill gaps in funding for community associations to advance the building of great communities across Calgary.



City of Calgary Public Art Microgrants

This program provides microgrants for community members to develop or install ideas for community-run public art projects.



Parks Foundation Amateur Sport Grant

The program supports capital projects that provide significant benefit to the continuation and enrichment of sport. Eligible organizations, based in Calgary, can apply for grants for new sports facilities, expanding or improving existing facilities, or purchasing sport equipment.



Parks Foundation Building Communities Grant

The Building Communities program supports a variety of community-led park or playground initiatives by awarding grants of up to \$30,000.



Parks Foundation Stella Conceptual Drawing Grants

The Stella Conceptual Drawing Grants program is intended to provide seed money for the development of a concept to re-envision Calgary's parks, pathways and natural areas.



Alberta Blue Cross Built Together Program Grants

Grants to help Albertans build spaces for active living in their community.



Alberta Recreation and Parks Association Grants

A list of external funding opportunities from government, corporations and not-for-profit organizations specific for the recreation and parks sector, compiled by ARPA.



Government of Alberta Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP)

Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) funding matching funding to acquire, build, purchase, repair, renovate, upgrade or expand sports, recreational, cultural or other related public-use community facilities.



Government of Alberta Community Initiatives Program (CIP)

Community Initiatives Program (CIP) provides funding support to support organizations that contribute to their communities and create opportunities for Albertans to engage with their communities.



Calgary Foundation

The Calgary Foundation offers various grants of different sizes for projects.



Co-Op Community Spaces Funding

The Co-op Community Spaces Program was established to improve community health and well-being by building places for Western Canadians to come together, build social connections and enable community development in communities with a local Co-Op.



Canadian Tire Community Development Grants

Operational support and programming support grants available.



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant

Eligible projects include schoolyard greening, park revitalization, community gardens, park programming and citizen science initiatives.



APPROVALS AND CONSTRUCTION

Prior to being able to build or modify an outdoor public space, the community advocate will need to obtain the relevant approvals and permits. This part of the process typically requires the project to have the necessary funding (i.e., Financing and Fundraising is complete), a clearly articulated plan (i.e., Project Planning is detailed enough to apply for approvals), and the necessary partnerships are established (i.e., Community Engagement and Relationship Building have led to demonstrable project support).

Purpose

The primary purpose of the approvals and construction phase is to:

- Meet The City's requirements so that the construction of the outdoor public space can begin.
- Build (or enhance) the outdoor public space.

Be prepared in advance and anticipate all the roadblocks you're going to have for everything before you start your project. And then what happens is you get people to sign their commitment before you start everything. And then when you have someone starting to give you a roadblock, and I can give you several instances where the roadblock came up and I said, well, actually here's the letter, so we're allowed to do this, but these reasons and sorry, I appreciate what you're saying, but we already got that covered and thanks for raising it, but it's already covered. This risk is taken care of and we are in fact allowed to do it. I cannot, I cannot tell you how many times. Because it was done in advance that that roadblock became a nonissue.



Recommendations

- **Finalize the Design of the Space:** Engage the community, incorporate feedback, and finalize the design based on the amount of in-kind and financial support raised. Landscape architects are a great resource for design input and validation, landscape drawing and specification preparation, and generally have a wealth of knowledge around City processes and best practices.
- **Maintain Good Relationships:** The approvals and construction process is easier when it's viewed as a team effort. It's important for community advocates to maintain good relationships with all the project

partners and approvers involved to keep the project moving forward. As with any team effort, relationships will stay healthy and productive if communication is constructive and expectations are clearly articulated. Remember, everyone involved shares the common goal of enhancing park spaces, but this goal is viewed from different perspectives.

- **Document Proof of Support:** Most approvals processes will require the community advocate and team to obtain proof of support through letters of support and/or sight line surveys. Some grants will require a sight line survey be completed prior to applying for funding and letters of support can substantially increase chances of success.



They did end up letting us do everything that we wanted to do in the end, but we definitely had to really, really stand up to a lot of organizations, and really be firm about what we wanted. But it would have been a lot easier to just kind of go with the flow.

-Community Advocate

- **Typical Approvals and Requirements:** With the help of partners such as Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators and Community Strategists, the community advocate will through the necessary approvals and processes. These vary depending on the nature of the project but generally include the following:
 - Obtaining proof of insurance.
 - City approval of construction drawings.
 - Completing necessary permits and reviews.
 - Creating lease, license of occupation or optional amenities agreements.

- Completing a request for proposals process and obtaining quotes from eligible contractors/vendors.
- Finalizing a construction plan and schedule.



So once we had all of our money in place, then the landscape architects helped us choose contractors and the City of Calgary did the same thing. They require you to interview three contractors and then to choose one. And they have an approved list of contractors, so you can only reach out to their people that are on the list.

-Community Advocate

Common Challenges

- **Navigating Complex Processes:** The approvals and construction process can be time consuming and involve a significant amount of document review and completion. Contracts and permitting requirements are often written in 'legalese' which can make it challenging to understand what is expected of a community advocate. This challenge may require partnerships with individuals familiar with or responsible for the process, and the key strategy is patience and a willingness to collaborate.
- **Risk and Liability Management:** One of the most common challenges expressed by community advocates is reconciling their vision for the project with the City's requirements related to the management of risk and liability. In addition to risks associated with physical harm to users of an outdoor public space, the financial liability associated with maintaining the space is often identified as a barrier to innovative outdoor space design. As described earlier in Project Planning, knowing how to respond to "Hearing No" is an important skill for a community advocate.

Consider how the plan can be modified to manage concerns that are raised and explore the root cause of the “No” in order to address it with constructive creativity.

Key Partners

- **Parks & Open Spaces Community Strategists:** Community Strategists have a wealth of knowledge and experience that can aid a community advocate in navigating the approvals and construction process.
- **Community Associations:** The community associations may have completed similar outdoor public space projects in the past. The community advocate may be able to work with the individuals at the association who have subject matter expertise based on previous experience.
- **Parks Foundation:** Partners at Parks Foundation are familiar with a wide range of outdoor public space projects and can provide valuable guidance on how to best work through the approvals and construction processes.
- **Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators:** NPCs are essential partners when navigating City requirements and processes.

Resources



[Lease or License of Occupation](#)
City of Calgary

City of Calgary website for organizations currently or seeking to hold a lease or license of occupation agreement with the City of Calgary



[Partner Project Guide](#)
(Request this document through the NPC)
City of Calgary

City of Calgary process diagram to develop, renovate or update a public amenity.



[Request for Land Form](#)
(Request this document through the NPC)
City of Calgary

City of Calgary form for an association to request land for a project. Checklist and context on what is required.



[Sightline Survey](#)
(Request this document through the NPC)
City of Calgary

City of Calgary form to document the approval / disapproval of individuals within line of sight of the project.



[Sample RFP/Procurement Guide](#)
City of Calgary

City of Calgary resources for preparing construction procurement documents



[Park Development Guidelines \(for Developers\)](#)
City of Calgary

Guidelines and specifications primarily for developers, including landscape construction, native plants list, and optional amenities (section 7.9 of Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications for Landscape Construction)



[Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications: Landscape Construction](#)
City of Calgary

City guidelines for the construction of landscape elements.



We're really, really stuck on do you have enough money to operate it after because it's always, you can always find the money to run it or to build it... But we want to know, from a risk perspective that you are able to operate it long-term.

-City Employee



ACTIVATION AND MAINTENANCE

Activation and Maintenance represent two ongoing activities that begin once an outdoor public space project reaches completion. Activation represents an opportunity to share the project team's success with the community and to introduce community members to the new (or enhanced) space they can now enjoy. For outdoor public space projects involving infrastructure, ongoing maintenance is often required, specific requirements may have been specified in maintenance plans developed during Project Planning or Approvals and Construction.

Purpose

The primary purpose of activation and maintenance is to:

- Ensure the space is kept in good repair and condition for the safety and enjoyment of the community members who use it.
- Introduce the community to the new or revitalized space so that they feel a sense of ownership and inclusion with it.

Recommendations

- **Plan an Activation Event:** Activation is the process of welcoming people to experience and take ownership of an outdoor public space. An ideal activation process evolves through stages of initial awareness, engagement with the space, developing a sense of ownership, and ultimately caring for the space. For a community that has been engaged throughout the process of building and/or enhancing a local park space, the project's completion should be cause for great excitement. An event to welcome the community into the new space is a great opportunity to share the success, connect with wider members of the community, and demonstrate the benefits of the space's amenities and features.

I would love to have like a parade of garage sales. That was something always brought up, or block parties or things like that. But we just don't do that anymore... you have to get a special permit from city of Calgary... you have to have fire escape routes, and people with first aid training and there's a lot of red tape to doing a lot of these local events that should just be fun. But there's a lot of liability nowadays and things like that that stop a lot of really activated people from taking that into their community.



- **Activation is Ongoing:** Ongoing activation activities help to preserve the excitement around a space and invite new users to enjoy it. Depending on the park space, activation activities may take many different forms, including:
 - Sports tournaments,
 - Yoga or meditation classes,
 - Planting or harvesting activities or events,
 - Book exchanges,
 - Facilitated children's play activities,
 - Music or other performances,
 - Pancake breakfasts,
- **Maintenance Can Bring Community Together:** Requirements to maintain an outdoor public space can provide opportunities for social connection and help bring community together. If certain community groups were unable to engage in earlier phases of the project, consider circling back with them to see if they would be interested in supporting ongoing space maintenance. Having ownership over a piece of public space, whether through a stroke of a paintbrush or watering a garden patch, allows community members to feel a sense of pride in the space, and can help decrease the likelihood of vandalism.



Advertising is one of the biggest challenges. SO hard to get the word out for cheap anywhere other than Facebook. Even Calgary public libraries won't let us post events anymore. Schools are unable to as well. All information must be vetted through their organizations, so they will only advertise events happening by reputable companies or the City.

-Community Advocate

Common Challenges

- **Limited Activation Funding:** Activation events are often difficult to find funding for, often because they aren't eligible project costs for many grants or funds. Beyond lowering the cost of proposed activation activities, consider working with the Community Association. They can be great allies in planning for ongoing activation activities and have a mandate to provide programming, communications, and engagement for the surrounding community.



Leave about 15% extra in the budget for contingencies... if there was a piece of wood that no one recognized was on its way to getting rotted but a year later rotted, you know, having something in the budget to pick up those loose ends.

-Community Advocate

- **Limited Maintenance Support:** Volunteer turnover and challenges in succession planning within community associations often result in fewer individuals available to support maintenance activities. It's not uncommon for maintenance work to end up depending on grassroots organizations and volunteers. When this happens, it is often necessary to circle back to the community engagement phase of a project, this time with a focus on keeping the outdoor space in good repair as opposed to building it.
- **Liability:** Any public event brings with it the potential risk that someone attending the event experiences harm or damages property. The organizers of the event typically bear the burden of that liability, which can at times seem overwhelming. Community advocates should consider partnerships with community groups that have experience managing event

liability (e.g., the community association) to avoid navigating the necessary insurance processes on their own.

Key Partners

- **Volunteers:** Activation and maintenance activities typically depend on engaged and motivated volunteer groups. Even if there are already volunteers attached to the project based on previous engagement activities, there may be value in ongoing volunteer engagement to handle turnover and succession planning.
- **Community Associations:** Community associations can be great partners in promoting activation and maintenance activities within the community as well as finding and coordinating volunteer opportunities.



We had planned to have a book swap [when the fence came down], and construction just ran over [the original completion date]. So, we held it outside of the fence and it was snowy and miserable and so many people came. Like hundreds of people. It was amazing.

-Community Advocate

Resources



Resources for Activating Parks

Park People

Park People is an organization committed to supporting community groups activate the power of parks. Their website provides a series of information resources to support community members to activate park spaces.



How to Plan an Event

Jennifer Bridges

This article from Jennifer Bridges can serve as a general guide for community advocates unfamiliar with the event planning process.



311 Online Services

The City of Calgary

Community advocates should explore City services through 311 to identify potential resources and supports for activation and maintenance activities, including:

- **Park Play Bins:** Parks PlayBins are treasure chests filled with games, recreation equipment, fun activities and so much more. All citizens have to do is create a Service Request to Unlock the PlayBin and discover the treasures within! You must be 12 years or older to book a PlayBin. Available through the City's 311 Online Services Portal (works best in Google Chrome and MS Edge).



TD Friends of the Environment grant

TD Bank

TD offers a grant which will cover park programming activities. Community advocates should investigate the grant as a means to cover activation and maintenance activities that have an environmental component.



City of Calgary Event Bookings

The City of Calgary

This City of Calgary web page allows the user to book outdoor public spaces for events and provides information on when permits are required.



I incorporated a sustainability element of eight years into the project plan, the business plan. I identified a group to ask them if they would be responsible for maintaining the project over this time frame and got agreement on that and then had a budget for that.

-Community Advocate

RESOURCES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF SPACES

The following tables provide links to resources that can be useful for outdoor public space projects involving community gardens and urban agriculture, playgrounds, school boards, or art projects.

Community Gardens and Urban Farming

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Community Gardens Handbook <i>Alberta Health Services</i>	A checklist of requirements for starting a community garden, following a location approval from the Calgary Parks & Open Spaces.
Steps to Start a Community Garden <i>Calgary Horticultural Society</i>	Steps to start a community garden, complete with links to additional resources. Compiled by the Calgary Horticulture Society.
Breaking Ground Toolkit <i>Evergreen</i>	The resources in this toolkit are intended to assist individuals, community members, planners and designers in realizing the goal of a greener and more sustainable city.
Community Gardens Checklist <i>Calgary Horticultural Society</i>	A checklist of requirements for starting a community garden, following a location approval from the Calgary Parks & Open Spaces.
Botanical Gardens of Silver Springs <i>Silver Springs Community Group</i>	A community-driven initiative providing an example of the creation of a community gathering space, destination park and botanical gardens featuring plants that grow in Calgary's climate.
Land of Dreams Urban Farming <i>Calgary Catholic Immigration Society</i>	Land of Dreams is an urban farming initiative which brings community, social connection and food, together in one exciting initiative. The project is in partnership with recently arrived immigrants and refugees.
How to Farm a Vacant Urban Lot <i>Agrarians Foundation</i>	A step-by-step guide by Young Agrarians, a program of Agrarians Foundation.
Highfield Regenerative Farm <i>Highfield Farm</i>	Highfield Farm is located on 15 acres in the heart of an industrial community in the city of Calgary. It is now seeing new life in a community of groups, businesses and individuals who contribute to the development of the gardens, park spaces, composting efforts, education and more.

Playgrounds

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<p>A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces <i>Rick Hansen Foundation</i></p>	<p>This toolkit has information and best practices for communities to design accessible play space(s) that children of all abilities can engage in and enjoy.</p>
<p>Inclusive Playgrounds in Calgary <i>The City of Calgary</i></p>	<p>The City of Calgary provides an interactive map of inclusive playgrounds in Calgary, with information on each site.</p>
<p>Playground Optimization Considerations <i>The City of Calgary</i></p>	<p>The City of Calgary has a Playground Optimization Program, which may inspire community advocates as they become aware of how the program proposes the re-purposing of existing spaces.</p>
<p>Shouldice Inclusive Playground Features <i>The City of Calgary</i></p>	<p>The City of Calgary hosts this report providing detail on playground features and benefits at Shouldice Inclusive Playground to provide insight into what an inclusive playground can be comprised of.</p>
<p>How to Create a Mobile Adventure Playground - A practical guide <i>Alberta Recreation and Parks Association</i></p>	<p>Alberta Recreation and Parks Association provides a guide to inspire and invigorate efforts to promote child-led, unstructured, risky play in your community. The resource includes templates, and links to other organizations.</p>
<p>Calgary Playground Review <i>Volunteer Organization</i></p>	<p>A community advocate led website offering a compilation of the best park and playground features around Calgary.</p>
<p>Inspection and Maintenance Program for Play Spaces <i>Alberta Health Services</i></p>	<p>This checklist from AHS provides an unbiased perspective for Community Advocates who want to understand how play space condition is evaluated.</p>

Projects with School Boards

Projects with School Boards will follow a different partnership and approvals process than projects on City of Calgary property. Community advocates looking to lead a project in collaboration with a school should start by engaging the existing parent societies and associations.

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Catholic Schoolboard Playground and Outdoor Classroom Guidelines and Requirements <i>Calgary Catholic School Division</i>	Information detailing playground and outdoor classroom guidelines and requirements
CBE Parent Societies and Associations <i>Calgary Board of Education</i>	Information on parent societies, associations, and councils within the CBE.

Art Projects

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Northeast Public Art Initiative <i>The City of Calgary</i>	The City of Calgary provides details on an initiative launched to increase public art opportunities in NE Calgary.
BUMP Festival <i>BUMP Festival</i>	BUMP is Calgary's street art festival. To date, the BUMP Festival has transformed Calgary with over 180+ public art installations, capturing the imagination of residents and visitors in a celebration of the arts and community.
Calgary Art Murals <i>Travel with the Smile</i>	A travel blog discussing a compilation of art murals in Calgary, providing inspiration for community art projects.
Calgary Public Art Map <i>The City of Calgary</i>	The City of Calgary provides an interactive map that enables community advocates to review the location of current public art installations.
Northern Hills Mural <i>Northern Hills Community Association</i>	Northern Hills Mural was a community art project in North Calgary engaging 800 volunteers in creating an 850-metre-long mural. Northern Hills Community Association hosts information about the project, which provides an example of activation and sharing stories of success.