

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

Date	January 29, 2020	
Time	1:00	
Panel Members	Present Chris Hardwicke (Co-Chair) Gary Mundy Beverly Sandalack Jack Vanstone Michael Sydenham	Distribution Chad Russill (Chair) Terry Klassen Ben Bailey Colin Friesen Glen Pardoe Ryan Agrey
Advisor	David Down, Chief Urban Designer	
Application number	DL2020-0001	
Municipal address	936 16 Av SW	
Community	Beltline	
Project description	New park space	
Review	first	
File Manager	Richard Goecke	
City Wide Urban Design	Dawn Clarke	
Applicant	City of Calgary Parks, Ground Cubed Landscape Architects	

Panel Summary

This park came to the UDRP through the Design Liaison process nearing the end of the design process, and following 2 public engagements. The Panel strongly recommends that public projects like this be brought to the Panel earlier in the process where meaningful commentary can be provided, rather than late so that it is more likely that the advice can be seen to be constructive and can be acted upon.

Please refer to specific comments below.

Applicant Response

(March 11, 2020)

Urban Design Element	
Creativity <i>Encourage innovation; model best practices</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall project approach as it relates to original ideas or innovation 	
UDRP Commentary	The Panel appreciates the attempt to design a park space that can accommodate a wide range of uses and flexible programming. There is however a lack of clarity in the delineation of space through paving, planting and other design interventions. The layby parking could be a good intervention if details that work with the framework of Roads and Transportation are given thoughtful resolution. If not, there is a danger that the layby will simply result in a widened road surface, to the detriment of this walkable residential community.
Applicant Response	<p>After further consideration and exploration, the plan has been altered to eliminate the layby from the projects scope of work. This will remove potential issues with a widened road surface and mitigate complications with existing infrastructure (light standards and shallow utilities).</p> <p>The design team has reviewed the access routes on site and created a wider entrance in the southwest corner of the site to minimize the turf area and increase the hardscaped plaza area for the inclusion of social seating. The site entrance in the southeast corner was also widened, opening the physical connection and blending the park into The Royal site (adjacent parcel).</p> <p>In terms of the delineation of space through paving, the design team has decided to simplify the hardscaped pavers and rather than using three different types, use two. Areas with the lighter coloured paving material are areas where people will likely stay in the space longer – the intent is that there will be less heat given off by the paving in the summer. The area with darker paving (the diagonal spine) is the primary pedestrian flow through the site and is intentionally dark to absorb and retain heat in the winter to encourage melting. Additionally, this spine is paved with longer pavers evoking a sense of movement.</p>
Context <i>Optimize built form with respect to mass and spacing of buildings, placement on site, response to adjacent uses, heights and densities</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massing relationship to context, distribution on site, and orientation to street edges Shade impact on public realm and adjacent sites 	
UDRP Commentary	The Panel is not able to clearly understand how this park fits within the context of other parks in the neighbourhood or the urban park and street design vocabulary. If the design is responding to a stated Parks Department purpose and benefit of this space, it is not evident.
Applicant Response	The Beltline community is distinct in that it is foremost a residential neighbourhood, and yet distinctly urban due to its proximity to downtown and 17 th Ave SW. What may be appropriate in a park space eight blocks to the North may not be appropriate in this park's location due to the demographic of the surrounding area. The park has been designed with this in mind, in addition to responding to input gathered from extensive public engagement.
Human Scale <i>Defines street edges, ensures height and mass respect context; pay attention to scale</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massing contribution to public realm at grade 	
UDRP Commentary	Many of the intended spaces are not clearly delineated, and it is not apparent if they are properly located or proportioned (e.g. ping-pong area and the performance stage). At the ground level, paving patterns are interesting in plan-view graphics but do not appear to provide cues to the intended use of the space. Regarding microclimate, the panel questions if a wind study from The Royal is available to Parks or if consideration has been given to possible downdraft from the building. Overhead shade structures do not appear to have a purpose against the backdrop of planting. Many sections of the paths are too narrow, and the entry to the park from the southwest as well as the proposed seating area at that corner do not appear to be properly sized or designed according to the expected high uses. Grass surfaces at this corner are questionable.
Applicant Response	<p>After further consideration, a number of park items have been either removed or relocated. The ping pong table has been relocated to the western edge of the open flex space where it has ample room, no longer conflicts with the pathway connection to BOSA Royal and can serve additional uses. The overhead shade structures and stage/platform have been removed from the design to simplify the space.</p> <p>Turf areas have been reduced in the SW corner of the park and replaced with more durable hardscaped plaza areas. The design team has also made the circular planting beds in the middle of the parcel smaller which has in turn increased pathway widths between them</p>

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	<p>creating more room for pedestrian flow throughout the sites primary pedestrian flow corridor and secondary entrances to the flex space – performance/gathering space. The design team has also reduced the tree and understory planting in these planting beds, to further increase visual connections through the site.</p> <p>The diagonal hardscaped spine may appear to have pinch points in plan view, but is actually 2.3m wide at its narrowest point, and 5.2m at its widest. After further exploration, it was determined that this is wide enough to accommodate high volumes of pedestrians moving through the site (despite high volumes not being regularly anticipated). After further communications and correspondence with the Parks subject matter expert through the Development Liaison (DL) process (DL 2020-0001), it has been determined that the widths of the pedestrian spine are adequate and work well with the scale/size of the park space.</p>
<p>Integration <i>The conjunction of land-use, built form, landscaping and public realm design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking entrances and at-grade parking areas are concealed • Weather protection at entrances and solar exposure for outdoor public areas • Winter city response 	
<p>UDRP Commentary</p>	<p>Street trees on 9th street currently shown as tree lilacs will not integrate the park with the established streetscape and aesthetic of the community especially given available soil volumes and character of tree lined streets in the Beltline. The garden theme is well represented in the park already, and the Panel suggests reconsideration of the street and streetscape to benefit the overall public realm and be more appropriate.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>	<p>The design team appreciates the comment; however, they feel strongly that as the site is a park space, it is more important to direct boulevard tree planting to pedestrian scale users rather than vehicular traffic by utilizing smaller ornamental tree plantings, more densely planted than a typical planted boulevard would be.</p> <p>After further examination it was determined that there is no strong linear boulevard tree planting along 9th Street, so the design team feels that they are not affecting/impacting the general aesthetic of the street by planting denser, smaller trees and only improving human scale along 9th Street.</p> <p>The design team has done what they have been able to do in the boulevard after taking in comments from the DTR (DL 2020-0001) regarding required offsets and setbacks from underground utilities in the Roads Right of Way. This has strongly impacted the placement of trees along 9th Street in the updated plan.</p>
<p>Connectivity <i>Achieve visual and functional connections between buildings and places; ensure connection to existing and future networks.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian first design, walkability, pathways through site • Connections to LRT stations, regional pathways and cycle paths • Pedestrian pathway materials extend across driveways and lanes 	
<p>UDRP Commentary</p>	<p>The Panel recognizes that stakeholders and public engagement feedback desired the park be perceived as public and not a front yard for The Royal condominium. However, the park design effectively turns its back on the building as there is only a very minor connection to the western steps of the Royal, creating a potentially undesirable space and a dark microclimate adjacent to this primary entry to The Royal. Consideration of an eastern edge that achieves a more semi-public/semi-private and elegant transition between the park and The Royal is recommended.</p>
<p>Applicant Response</p>	<p>The design team has widened the central pathway connection to The Royal to 2.0 meters wide and removed some of the trees directly adjacent to the pathway, to improve sight lines and access to the adjacent parcel. We have also converted the soft landscape area at the southeast edge of the site to hard landscaping which creates further visibility and accessibility to The Royal. The pathway connection has been moved north to better align with the Royal's accessible ramp.</p> <p>Bollard lighting has been adjusted to provide additional lighting along the park frontage with The Royal to connect this edge of the Park in better with its surroundings.</p>
<p>Animation <i>Incorporate active uses; pay attention to details; add colour, wit and fun</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building form contributes to an active pedestrian realm • Residential units provided at-grade 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elevations are interesting and enhance the streetscape 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel recognizes that this park will be animated primarily by daily and seasonal variation of users in this high-density area of the Beltline, and that passive uses and connections through the site have been provided, with the exception of the eastern edge connection to The Royal. However, it is also likely that this park will be a destination related to local businesses, and it is not evident that this has been addressed, for example the likelihood that the southwestern corner will be a popular place for gathering by patrons of the Café Beano on 9th Street, and possibly from Urban Fare and Starbuck's on 16th Avenue.</p> <p>The Panel understands and appreciates the rationale for layby parking for food trucks along 9th Street, although this will be an occasional use, and not necessarily requiring layby parking (for example, 12th Avenue by Central Memorial Park accommodates food trucks without layby parking). The panel recommends consideration of alternate curb alignments, for example, the creation of a bumpout across 9th Street for pedestrians traveling on 16th Avenue, as a cheaper and less disruptive option for accommodating food trucks. Otherwise, the inclusion of the layby will have undesirable impacts on the carriageway, parking and street tree alignments in the greater context of the street and traffic. The lighting in the park seems well considered.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>To address this concern, the design team has increased the size of the hardscaped area at the southwest corner of the site and added more seating to facilitate people utilizing this corner of the park. The site has very good solar aspect, and the proposed seating areas will provide a variety of opportunities for park users.</p> <p>As mentioned in an earlier response the plan has been altered to eliminate the layby from the projects scope of work.</p>
<p>Accessibility <i>Ensure clear and simple access for all types of users</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barrier free design Entry definition, legibility, and natural wayfinding 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel recognizes that the design is generally accessible. However, the Panel notes that the paths are too narrow in some sections. The entries into the park are not very legible, as many terminate in plantings, rather than clearly lead the pedestrian into seating or gathering areas. The connections between the internal paths and the public sidewalks are not well resolved in some locations.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>The narrowest pathway sections range from 2.25 – 2.60 meters wide, while the wider pathway sections range from 3.0 – 5.2 meters wide. The design team feels that these pathways have sufficient width and are in scale with the park as a whole.</p> <p>We have widened the pathway connection to The Royal to 2.0 meters wide and removed some of the trees directly adjacent to the pathway, to improve sight lines and access. This pathway also now aligns much better with the Royal's accessible ramp.</p>
<p>Diversity <i>Promote designs accommodating a broad range of users and uses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail street variety, at-grade areas, transparency into spaces Corner treatments and project porosity 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel recognizes this park is located where residential densities are high and expected to grow based on local ARP. The design seems to try to address all users at all times, however it does not seem to accommodate young children and families. At the same time, there are many elements included in the park (e.g. swinging table) that occupy much space and would only serve a limited number of people. The diversity and variety of elements may actually make the park less usable or enjoyable, as the Panel believes that there are too many disparate elements and small spaces to provide a legible space.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>Acknowledging there are many elements within the proposed site design, the design team has removed the swing bench, overhead structure, and the stage seating. This adjustment has also allowed us to relocate the ping pong table to a more appropriate area within the park.</p>
<p>Flexibility <i>Develop planning and building concepts which allow adaptation to future uses, new technologies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project approach relating to market and/or context changes 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel finds the flexibility in the design programme to be ambiguous, seemingly accommodating all users at all times, but lacking a distinct and underpinning story or concept as an urban park. Secondly, while this is a public park, it is also a forecourt to the adjacent buildings' front door, a relationship that is not well articulated, and is a potentially interesting</p>

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	<p>green space along 9th Street, the only one for several blocks., and this role does not seem to be acknowledged through a connection to the neighbourhood.</p> <p>The spaces within the park blend into one another and are largely unprogrammed. Further consideration of placemaking that embraces flexibility of use for events (such as a food truck rally, community events, staging for a pop-up market, etc) but that also has clarity of purpose and use during daily use is recommended.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>To better connect the site to the Royal, the design team has improved two connections. Planting in the SE corner has been removed and replaced with hardscape, and the pathway connection that connects the Royal to the flex space has been widened and visually reinforced with paving cues. Planting and lighting has been adjusted to better address this connection.</p> <p>The park has been designed with flexibility in mind. The large flex space (+/- 110 m²) is designed to accommodate events such as pop-up markets and performances. During the day the flex space it is populated with movable furnishings to allow users to create their own seating environments within the space.</p>
<p>Safety <i>Achieve a sense of comfort and create places that provide security at all times</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and security • Night time design 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel suggests that a CPTED audit be completed for the park and adjacent affected spaces. Areas of particular concern include the northeast corner where grading and dense planting create a potentially undesirable condition. Analysis of the walkway to the front door of the adjacent condominium and dead end is also suggested.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>To address the dead-end at the Royal near the bike racks, the design team has relocated and widened the pathway connection to allow better access in and out of this space. Lighting and planting has also been adjusted with CPTED in mind.</p> <p>It is the design team's belief that the perspective renderings and site plan made the planting appear denser in the NE corner than it is. For example, shrubs in the site plan may appear to be trees. Safety is the design teams number one priority; the planting in the NE corner has been adjusted to allow more visual permeability with CPTED in mind.</p>
<p>Orientation <i>Provide clear and consistent directional clues for urban navigation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance natural views and vistas 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The southwest corner of the park in its current design has poor legibility and function as it relates to existing and future adjacent uses, such as the coffee shop and other take-out eateries in the area. Notionally, the corner is contemplated as an extension of the streetside patios, but the corner lacks sense of entry and arrival and legibility of the park is not clear from this corner. Further, the orientation of the park and integration into the street is unclear. Discussion elsewhere in this document addresses the orientation of the park relative to the lane and The Royal.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>To address this concern, the design team has increased the size of the hard surface area at the southwest corner of the site, opening it up, additional seating has also been added to facilitate people utilizing this corner of the site.</p>
<p>Sustainability <i>Be aware of lifecycle costs; incorporate sustainable practices and materials</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site/solar orientation and passive heating/cooling • Material selection and sustainable products 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The panel recognizes that the long-term success of an urban park will be highly predicated on the ability of the City to maintain the soft landscape to a high standard given anticipated high level of use. Although the Parks representative indicated that Parks Operations is contemplating a higher standard of maintenance, this standard is not clear. The panel suggests that the maintenance standard be quantified and aligned with the design to ensure this park can function as intended over the long term as an asset.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>The design team appreciates that this will be a heavily utilized urban site and understands the importance of adequate maintenance to ensure the long-term success of the park space. As per the mandatory, council approved direct control requirement from Bylaw number 11D2015, this park will be maintained according to The City of Calgary Parks Class A standards (regularly mowed and irrigated) to ensure that it does not degrade over time.</p>
<p>Durability <i>Incorporate long-lasting materials and details that will provide a legacy rather than a liability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of low maintenance materials and/or sustainable products 	

• Project detailed to avoid maintenance issues	
UDRP Commentary	The Panel appreciates the design intent to achieve a 50% soft and 50% hard landscape as a metric set out by Parks but questions the rationale as a driving force in the design resolution, taking precedence over other key factors from the site inventory and analysis. The Panel recommends a review of the planting, moveable furniture, the swing and ping-pong table for lifecycle considerations. The turfgrass on the southwest corner given anticipated traffic is also recommended for review. The park in its current design will not likely age well, and considerable editing is recommended.
Applicant Response	<p>The 50% metric derives from a mandatory, council approved direct control requirement from Bylaw number 11D2015. The bylaw states that: Open Space must be provided on this parcel and must include the following “a minimum of 50.0 per cent of the area of the <i>Open Space as soft surfaced Landscape Area</i>”. The design team appreciates that this is an urban site which is why we have chosen to keep soft surfaced landscape area on site to only 51.75% (410 m²) of the parcel.</p> <p>Further review on the planting has taken place and various species have been exchanged with more durable substitutions. The swing has also been removed to simplify the design of the park. After further consideration the turfgrass on the southwest corner has been removed and replaced with a hardscape treatment.</p>