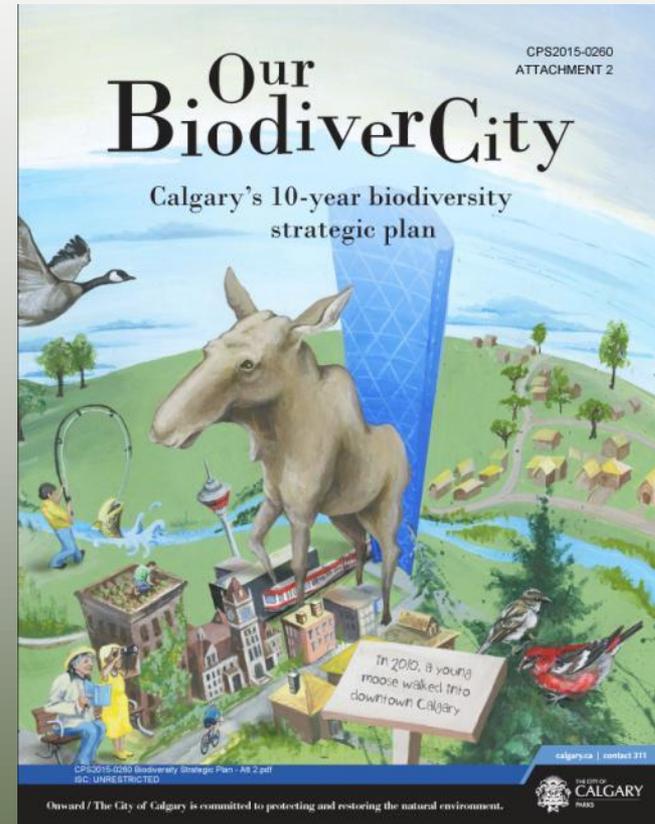
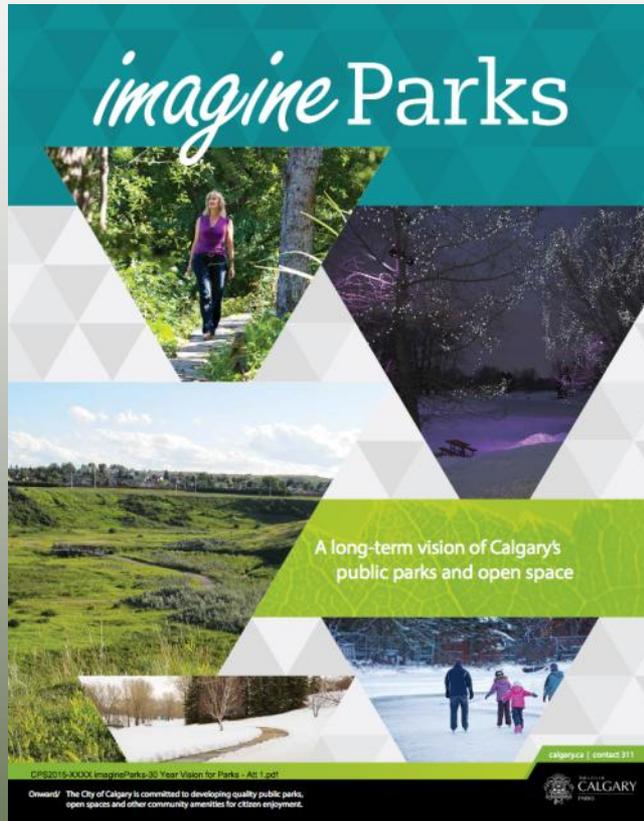


# SPC on Community and Protective Services

March 4, 2015



# Imagine Parks (CPS2015-0259)

# *imagine* Parks

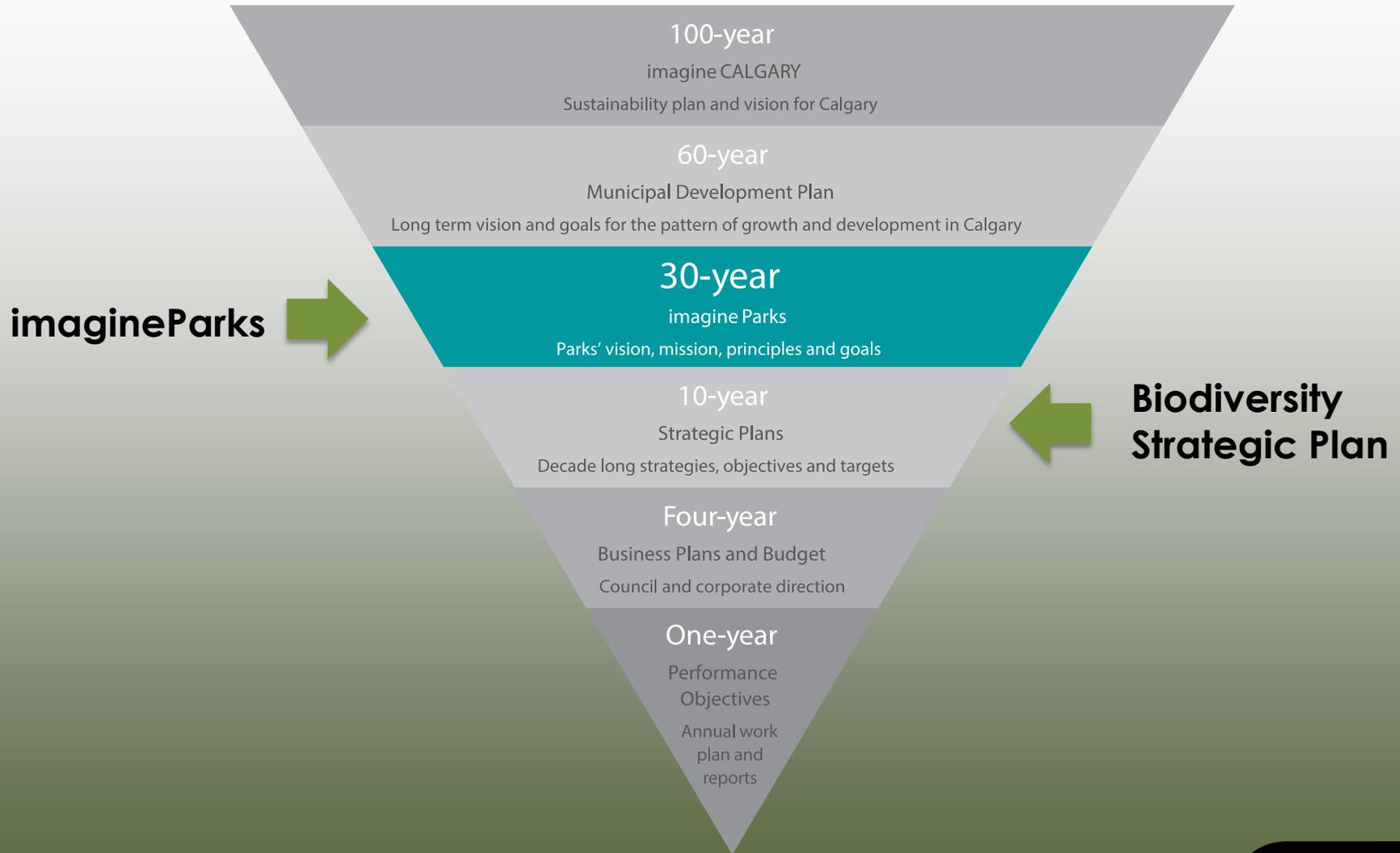
A long-term vision of Calgary's public parks and open space

calgary.ca | contact 311

CPS2015-XXXX ImagineParks-30 Year Vision for Parks - Att 1.pdf

Onward/ The City of Calgary is committed to developing quality public parks, open spaces and other community amenities for citizen enjoyment.

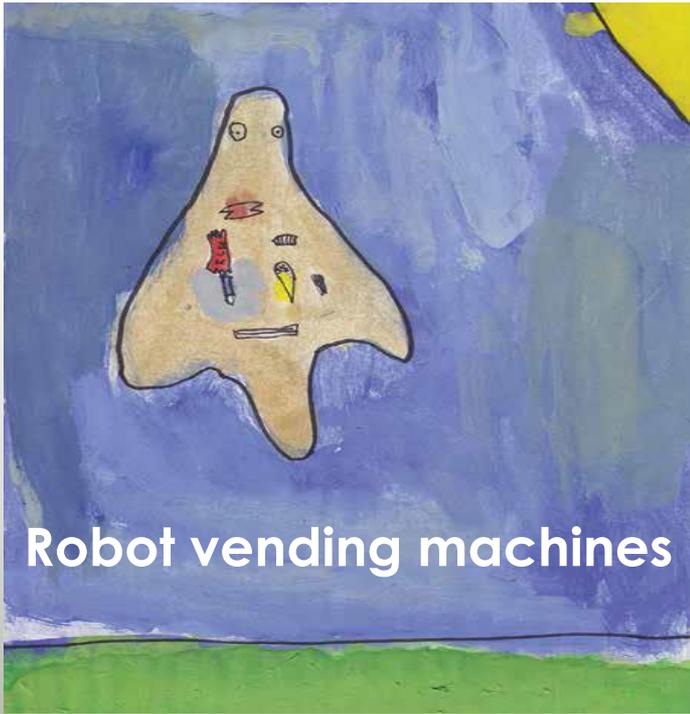
# ImagineParks (CPS2015-0259)



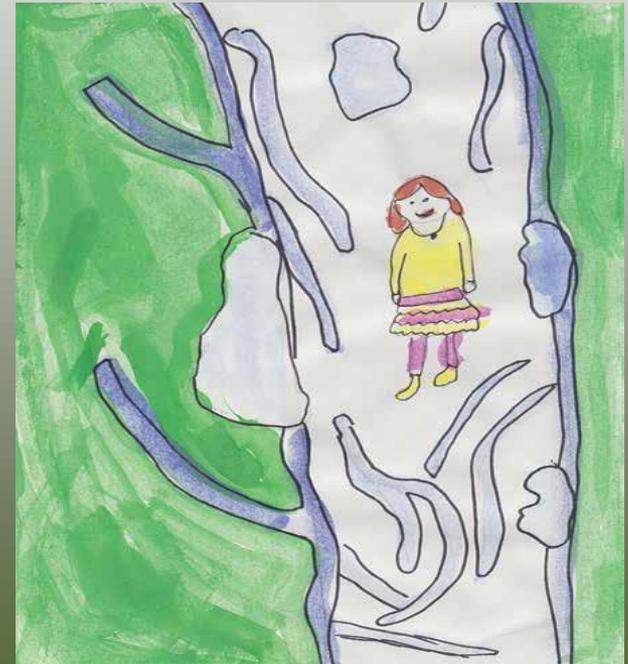
# Automatic snow removal on slides



# Robot vending machines



# Imagining Parks



# Animal translators



# Heated trails that melt snow

# Mission

*We enable, contribute to and sustain dynamic communities through great parks and open space.*

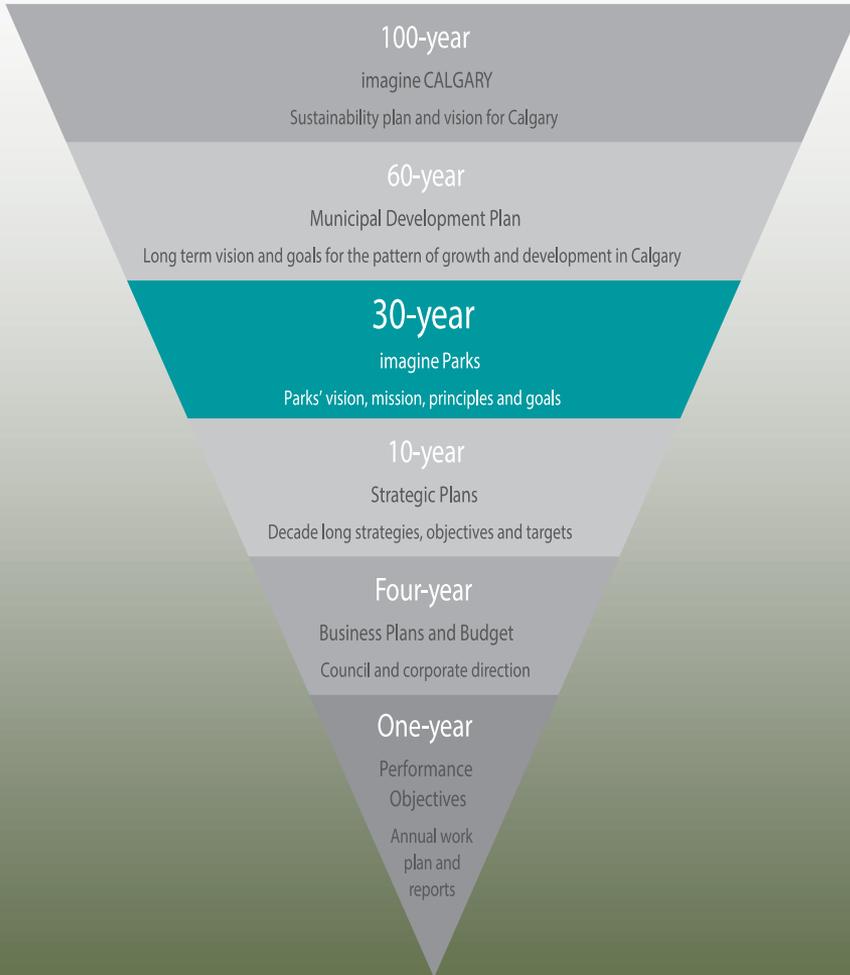
# Vision

*Calgary's parks and open space are cherished places that connect us to nature, our heritage and one another.*



# ImagineParks

# Focus on People



We value the natural environment and behave accordingly



Protect, conserve and enhance urban parks and open spaces



**Stewardship and Ecological Literacy**



Environmental Education & Initiatives Strategic Plan

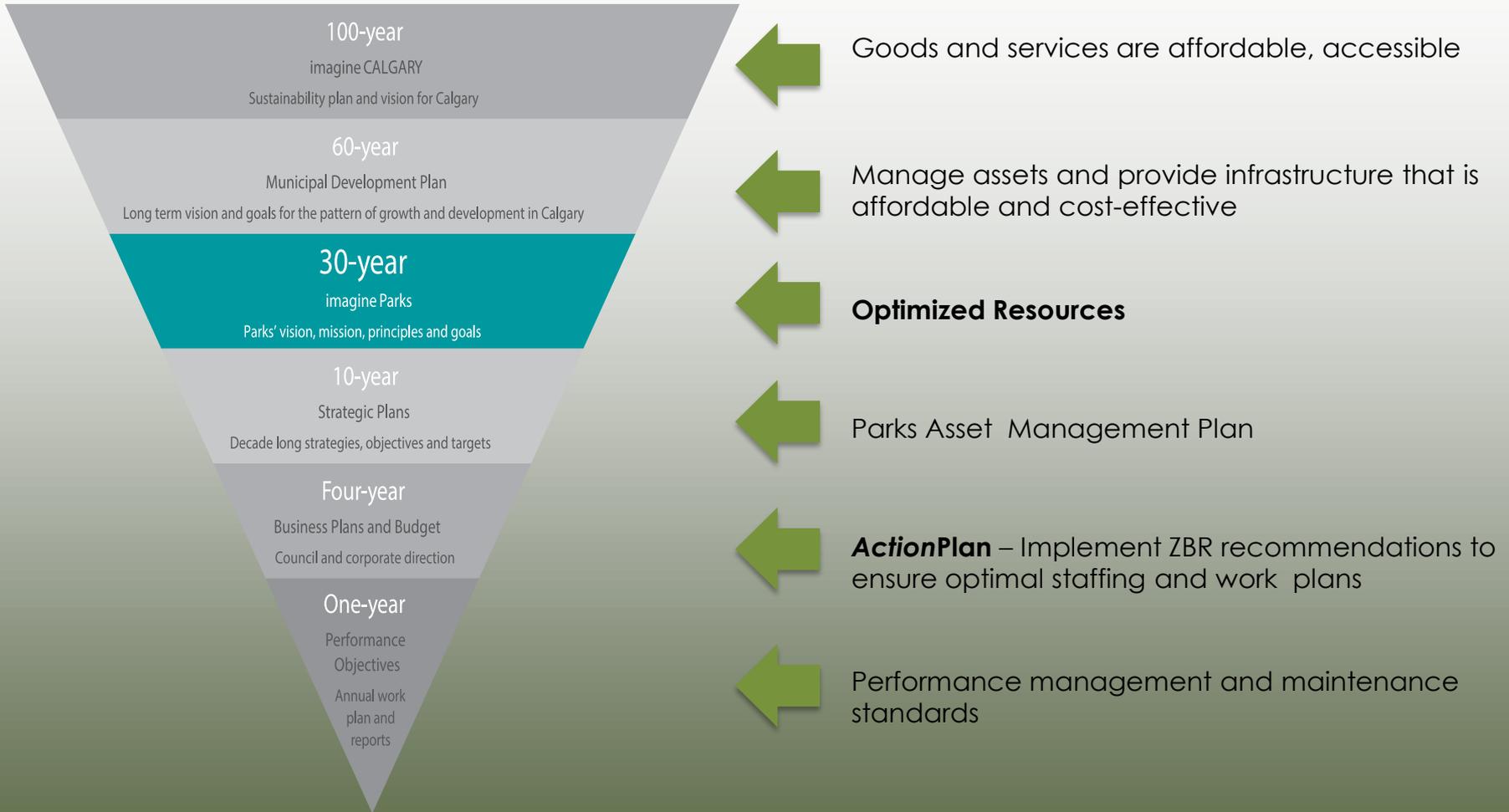


**ActionPlan** - A healthy and green city  
Provide education and volunteer programs



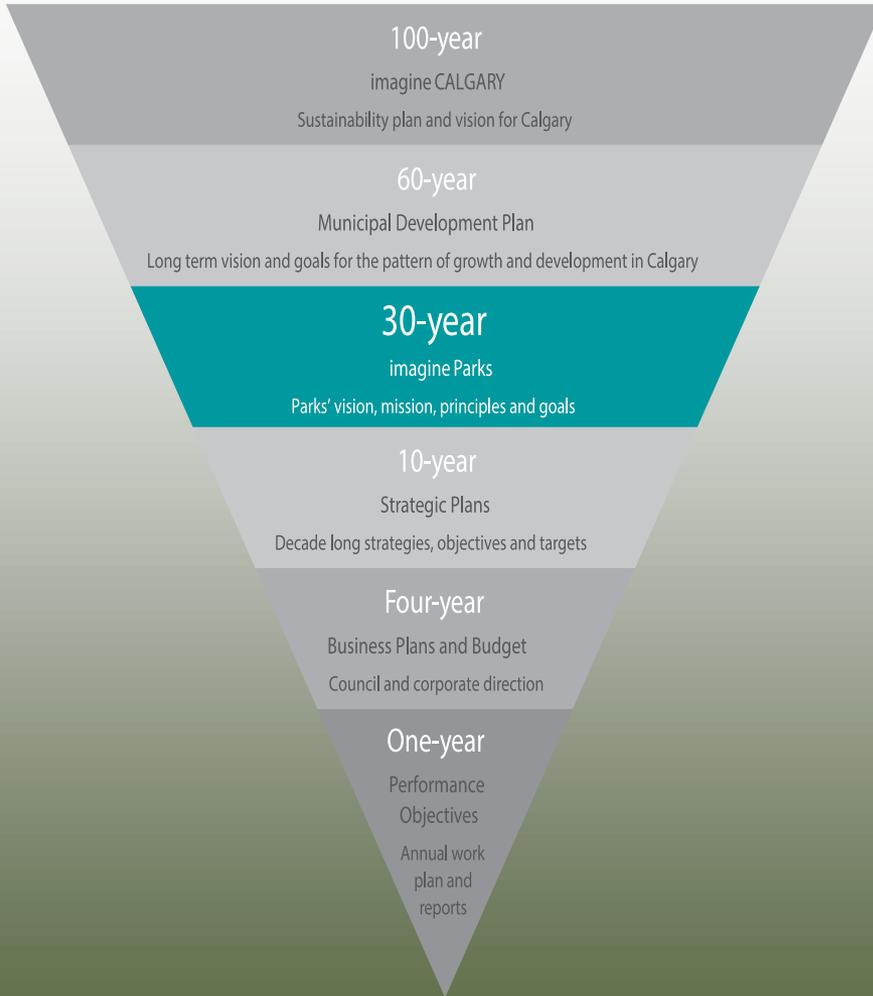
Agents of Nature app

# ImagineParks Governance & Management



# ImagineParks

# Focus on Open Space



Healthy levels Native biological diversity as measured through Habitat Sustainability index



Protecting, conserving & restoring environmentally significant areas, & providing a sustainable, connected & diverse open space system



**Natural Environment Conservation**



Biodiversity Strategic Plan



**Action Plan** – Protect and enhance our urban forest and natural landscape throughout Calgary.



Annual workplans—restoration, naturalisation and habitat management

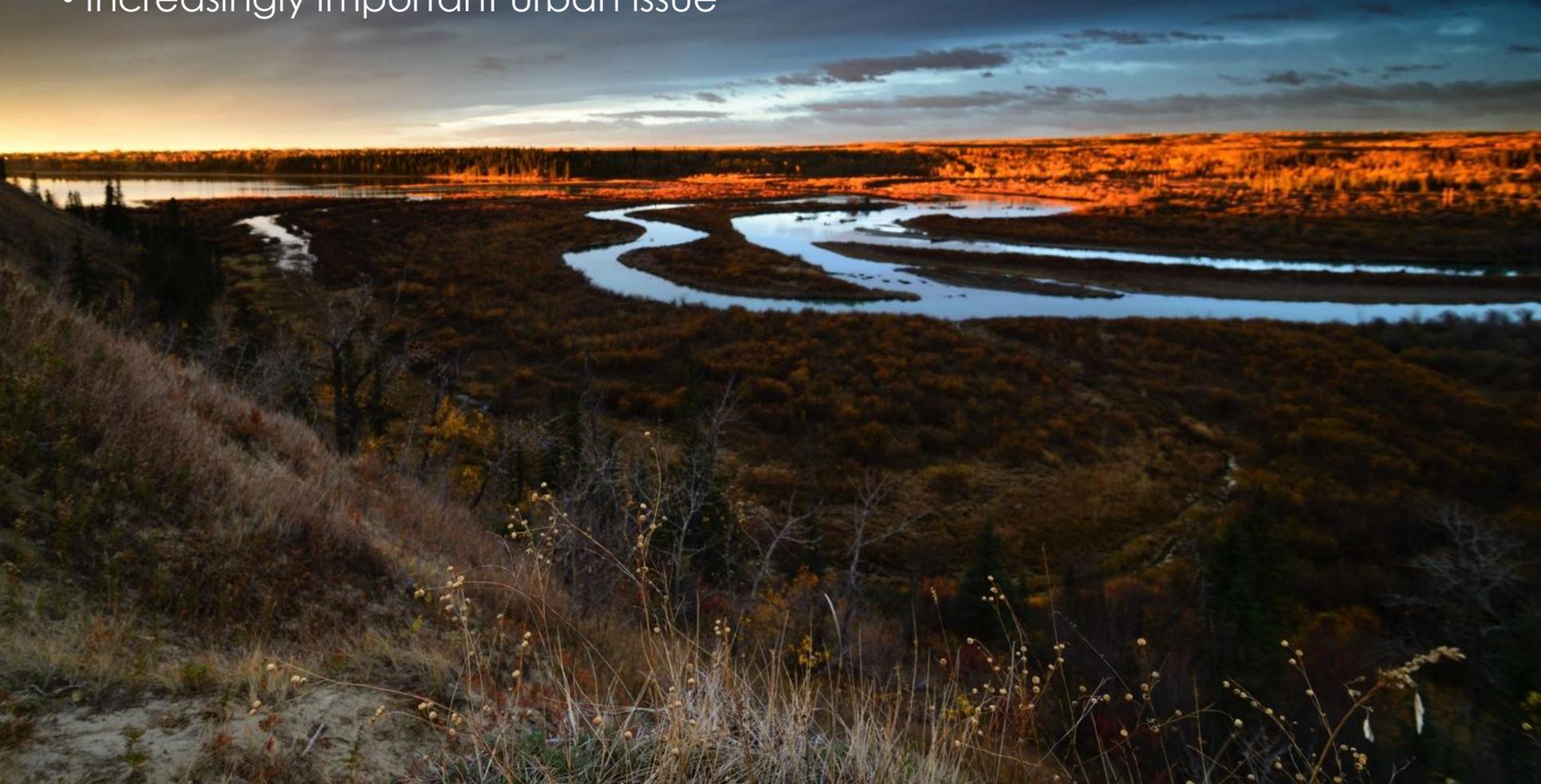
# Biodiversity Strategic Plan (CPS2015-0260)

- Based on principles of protection, development & management of Calgary's parks for biodiversity
- Has a city-wide focus – healthy communities need healthy parks and ecosystems



# Biodiversity — What is it?

- The species and habitats in a given region
- Important for our own well-being
- Vital ecosystem services – food, shelter, clean air and water
- Increasingly important urban issue



# What have we done already?

- Strong history of public & policy support
- Builds on direction from MDP/CTP/Imagine Calgary
- Fits into *imagineParks* 30 year vision
- Consistent with planning at provincial/federal/international levels

*...Conservation in urban areas becomes more important in order to improve human health and economic benefits to Canadians, and to minimize habitat loss and fragmentation.*

—Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment, 2013  
(*Response to the Parliamentary Report on Urban Conservation*)

# Calgary's approach

- **Part of the Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) program**
  - **International group focused on building local capacity for conservation in cities**
  - **Provided international experience and opportunities for benchmarking**
  - **Development of plan and policy done through this framework**

# LAB Commitments

- **Durban Commitment on Biodiversity (UE2011-19)**
- **Status Report on Calgary Biodiversity**
- **Strategic Action Plan**
- **Biodiversity Policy**
- **Implementation of 3 new biodiversity projects**



# Development of the Plan

- **Stakeholder engagement**
- **Four Guiding Principles**
  - Ecological Literacy
  - Ecological Resilience
  - Collaboration
  - Integration
- **Principles and Recommendations form the basis of the Strategic Plan & the Biodiversity Policy**



# Implementation

- **3 Biodiversity Initiatives at the core of the work program**
  - **Ecological Integrity Index**
  - **Landscape ecosystems**
  - **Citizen engagement and education**



# Measuring Success

- **By 2025, we will**
  - **Evaluate landscapes and set conservation targets**
  - **Restore/naturalize 20% of Calgary's open spaces**
  - **Comprehensive strategies for the management of invasive species**



# **ImagineParks (CPS2015-0259)**

## **Biodiversity Strategic Plan (CPS2015-0260)**

### **Administration Recommendations:**

#### **CPS2015-0259**

- Approve in principle, *ImagineParks*

#### **CPS2015-0260**

- Receive for Information, *The City of Calgary Biodiversity Report 2014*, and *Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year Biodiversity Strategic Plan*
- Approve the proposed Biodiversity Council Policy.

# imagine Parks

CITY OF CALGARY  
**RECEIVED**  
IN ENGINEERING TRADITIONS ROOM  
MAR 04 2015  
ITEM: CPS2014-0259  
Distributors  
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

A long-term vision of Calgary's  
public parks and open space

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# Letter from the Director

## Why *imagineParks*?

Parks are an essential part of quality urban living and parks and pathways have a special place in the hearts of Calgarians. We value our parks, actively using them for sports, festivals and exercise as well as for quiet respite and enjoyment of nature. Great parks contribute to healthy communities and a high quality of life in Calgary.

The *imagineParks* vision serves as a foundation for the future of City parks. It helps us re-imagine our public open spaces so that they have optimal benefits and value in the future. Undertaking a 30-year vision document pushes us to think in decades rather than years. Over the last 10 years alone, we have seen the global population shift to where more people live in cities than in rural environments. We have seen the increase in extreme weather events and the word resilience has become part of our common language. Across the world in parks, we see the emerging research around the strong correlation of urban parks and health; both physical and mental. Parks will also be an increasingly important part of insuring cities sustain acceptable biodiversity with healthy air, water, flora and fauna.

In 2010, The City of Calgary Parks celebrated our 100th anniversary. It was a time to celebrate our public open spaces and appreciate how much we've grown and accomplished as a city. It spurred us to more fully revere and celebrate our historic parks and cultural landscapes but it was also a time to look forward and imagine the future. We posed the question – should we re-imagine the future? This *imagineParks* document came out of asking that question.

What is important moving forward at this point in 2014, is the visionary thoughts and ideas that Calgarians have brought to the table, their passion, their support and their concern that parks continue to be an integral part of living a great life in Calgary.

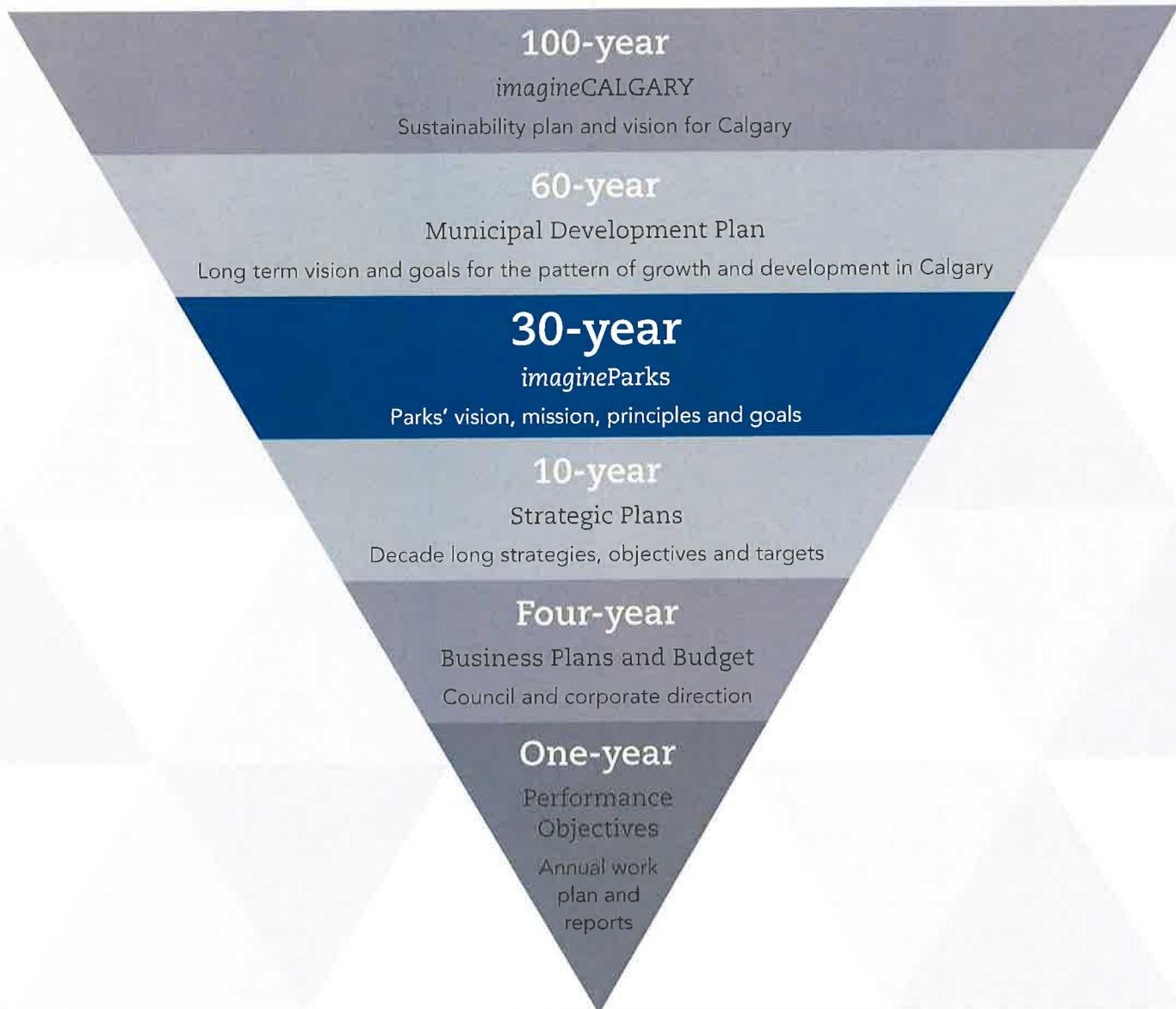
We thank every Calgarian that participated with us in our many conversations about the future of Calgary parks. We trust we have captured your thoughts and ideas.



**Anne Charlton**  
Parks Director  
The City of Calgary



# imagineParks Alignment



*imagineParks* is a 30-year vision that sets the overall strategic direction for the development and management of public parks and open space in Calgary.

Our vision nests with *imagineCALGARY*, a long-range urban sustainability plan for Calgary, and the Municipal Development Plan, which addresses future land uses, services and transportation systems within the city. The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) envisions Calgary within a 60-year timeframe. *imagineParks* is our vision of where we would like to be half way to MDP targets.

*imagineParks* commits us to action. As stewards of Calgary parks and open spaces, *imagineParks* serves as the foundation for 10-year strategic action plans, four-year business plans and budgets, and one-year performance objectives.

The plan recognizes the need for flexibility and to adapt to the changing needs of citizens and evolving organizational structures. Collaboration will also be vital to implementing our vision.

## Vision

Calgary's parks and open space are cherished places that connect us to nature, our heritage and one another.

## Mission

We enable, contribute and sustain dynamic communities through great parks and open space.

# Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles reflect the values identified by Calgarians through our *imagineParks* engagement process and are the foundation for our vision of Calgary's parks and open space.



## Be accountable and responsive

We are accountable for efficient, effective and responsive management of public open space and consider economic, social, environmental, smart growth, organizational and financial sustainability objectives. We are aligned with best practices and research, and strive to exceed all federal, provincial and municipal guidelines.

## Make people a priority

We ensure a variety of public open spaces are accessible to all regardless of age, income, gender, culture or ability. These spaces provide opportunities for rest and relaxation, social interaction, community vitality and a range of recreational, cultural and educational experiences.



## Conserve biodiversity and the natural environment

We aim to conserve biodiversity in the city and recognize healthy, functioning ecosystems are essential to our personal, community and economic well-being.



## Be adaptable and resilient

We are structured to function cohesively and efficiently. We systematically adapt to and respond to changing needs, climate and major events. We are able to continually deliver the programs and services that Calgarians need.

# Our Plan at a Glance

Below illustrates the framework that outlines our vision and goals of *imagineParks*.



We recognize that to achieve the vision for Calgary's parks and open space our actions in each category will require being highly cooperative and dependent on each element's success.

## Current work

- ▶ Collaborate with practitioners, researchers, community organizations and businesses to improve park design and service delivery.
- ▶ Facilitate volunteer work in parks and open space.
- ▶ Deliver outcome-based programming that links activities in natural environments to stewardship.
- ▶ Ensure a range of facilities, amenities and park types and sizes are accessible to all and reflect citizen expectations.

## Next steps

- ▶ Launch a city-wide customer level of service model.
- ▶ Deliver park programs and initiatives that contribute to a sense of community.
- ▶ Implement guidelines to allow for the allocation of recreational open space in business parks.
- ▶ Implement guidelines to determine appropriate allocation of “Wi-Fi hotspots” in parks and open space.
- ▶ Implement a score to measure if park design and services are providing intergenerational, economic and gender equity and security and are adaptive to changing community demographics.
- ▶ Develop educational curriculum and provide experiential learning for staff, volunteers and Calgarians.
- ▶ Regularly evaluate the operation and programming of parks and park facilities to ensure alignment with emerging trends and that community needs are being met.



Skating on Elbow River circa 1910s



Skating on Bowness Lagoon



All year round skating rink

## Current work

- ▶ Develop and implement a strategy to conserve and advance land and aquatic biodiversity in Calgary.
- ▶ Implement the Cultural Landscapes Strategic Plan, the Urban Forestry Strategic Plan, the Cemeteries Strategic Plan and Water Management Strategic Plan.
- ▶ Provide educational and interpretive components in parks and open space to enhance user experiences with respect to landscapes of ecological, cultural and archeological significance.

## Next steps

- ▶ Implement an open space acquisition and disposition strategy to more effectively manage land and service delivery.
- ▶ Identify future regional park location sectors and ensure a timely funding and acquisition process.
- ▶ Monitor land and water health to better understand the impacts of development and to act accordingly.
- ▶ Implement construction guidelines to minimize the impacts on soil, protected vegetation and habitat.
- ▶ Collaborate on planning a pilot community that contributes to ecosystem services such as clean air and water, waste break down and replenishment of ecological processes.
- ▶ Implement storm water management guidelines for new and redeveloped parks and open space.
- ▶ Implement an alternative energy production strategy for parks and open space, for example composting, animal waste, wind power, solar energy, etc.
- ▶ Implement an integrated waste strategy for parks and open space.
- ▶ Implement a public art and culture guideline for parks and open space.
- ▶ Establish strategies so mowed turf becomes a choice not a default.



Street trees



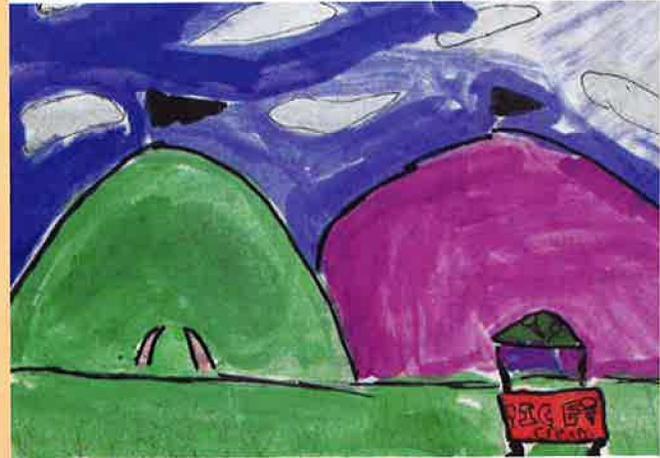
Playfield

## Current work

- ▶ Continue to refine and utilize the Parks Asset Reporting & Information System (PARIS) to improve service delivery.
- ▶ Advance strategies to meaningfully engage stakeholders in Parks initiatives, programming and design.
- ▶ Provide communications to engage a diverse set of communities.
- ▶ Establish guidelines for local retail and commercial activities in parks and open space.
- ▶ Advance collaborative relationships with specialists interested in advancing parks and open space initiatives.
- ▶ Advance employee recruitment and retention strategies.
- ▶ Recognize the economic, environmental and social value of parks and open space in growth management and capital project spending decisions.
- ▶ Advance a city-wide park asset management plan.

## Next steps

- ▶ Implement an *imagineParks* score to measure progress towards the vision for Calgary parks and open space.
- ▶ Embed resiliency into the planning and operating of parks and open space to minimize the impact of major disruptive events.
- ▶ Develop guidelines to formalize a process to seek alternative sources of funding for initiatives and programming in parks and open space.
- ▶ Implement career-long learning and training programs including opportunities for career cross-training and ongoing growth and development for staff.
- ▶ Develop post-secondary student orientation programs that attract arborists, biologists, hydrologists, wildlife experts, soil specialists, facility management, education and other professionals to Parks.



Small booths in parks that sell food



Brentwood community garden



River Café

# Measuring Success

## How will we know we are successful?

Establishing an *imagineParks* score will help us monitor our progress towards our vision. Measuring indicators of success in each of the nine goal areas will identify where we are performing well and where we need to adjust strategies.

Our 10-year strategic plans will be indicators of how well we are moving towards the 30-year vision. Performance measures developed for these plans will be our indicators of success.





2007 advertising campaign

## Nature

Other avenues of research showed that recently the natural world is being understood through a lens of ecosystem services: parks and open space provide us with quantitative goods and services. The United Nations Environment Programme has synthesized these services into four main categories by. They are:

- ▶ **Provisioning services:** freshwater, energy (especially the emerging issues around biofuel production) and capture fisheries.
- ▶ **Regulating services:** climate, water, natural hazard and disease regulation, water purification and waste treatment, which are often strongly affected by the overuse of provisioning services.
- ▶ **Cultural services:** recreation and ecotourism service.
- ▶ **Supporting services:** nutrient cycling and primary production, which underlie the delivery of all the other services, but are not directly accessible to people.

Researchers have begun to illuminate the direct and indirect economic value of these ecosystem services. For example, strictly as a function of geography, properties near green space tend to have higher prices; unique and beautiful parks are often associated with tourism; local businesses operating in or near a park can attract additional customers. Through this lens parks provide spaces for the exchange of goods and services and thus aiding commerce.

## Focus areas

Our research and engagement with citizens indicated a broadening of what parks are. Simply, parks can provide a sense of community, encourage health, aid recreation, increase civic beauty, attach us to history and provide an array of ecological functions. We synthesized the numerous values provided by parks into three focus areas. They are:

- ▶ **People**
- ▶ **Open Space**
- ▶ **Governance and Management**

We recognize that these focus areas are not mutually exclusive but rather help us categorize our goals and actions to manage and help us realize the vision for Calgary's parks and open space.

*imagineParks* establishes a foundation to work toward the type of city Calgarians envision. This foundation is a clear direction for our strategic action plans, business plans and annual objectives.

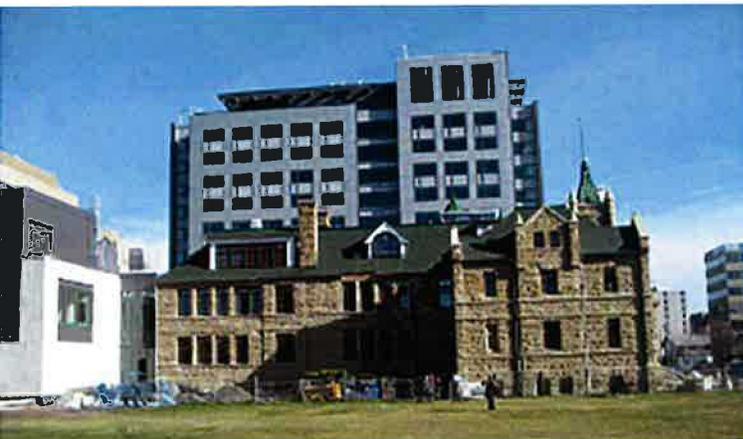
Through *imagineParks*, The City of Calgary Parks begins another chapter in serving this great city to ensure our parks and open space continue to contribute to Calgary's high quality of life.



# Re-imagine

**What do our stories help reveal?** Parks have long been associated with recreation and nature. Parks were where we went to exercise or experience an urban oasis. Parks were the “lungs” of the city, where people went to breathe fresh air and to have a respite from the busyness of city life.

New stories are starting to be told. Calgarians, researchers and experts in their field are telling new stories about parks. We’ve begun to nuance the recreational and natural value of parks. Recognizing that parks have been and will continue to be an essential component of Calgary, our 30-year vision continues the trajectory of excellence based on the stories we heard.



Barb Scott Park (before)



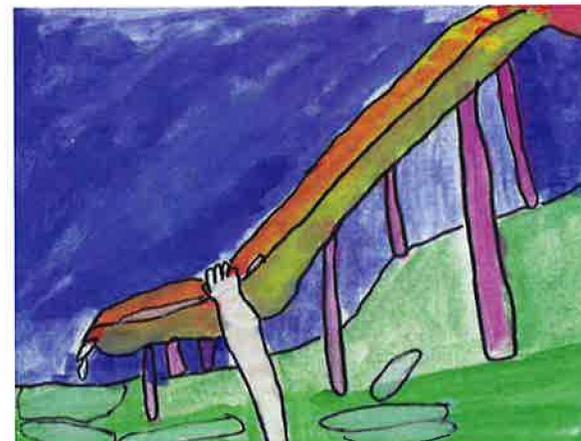
Barb Scott Park (after)



A playground inside a nature park



Animal translators



Automatic snow removal on slides

# Stakeholder Engagement Summary

The City of Calgary Parks conducted a comprehensive engagement process that focused on collecting qualitative information from citizens and stakeholders firsthand. Face to face opportunities for dialogue were supplemented by statistically relevant survey information. More than 1,600 detailed responses were received from citizens from all walks of life, including frequent and infrequent park users, stakeholder groups, subject matter experts, City staff and the general public.

## Intensive public engagement activities:

- ▶ Four focus groups with a total of 36 randomly selected citizens (including one youth focus group).
- ▶ Nine stakeholder visioning workshops with 149 participants.
- ▶ Group discussions with 180 children from grades 2 to 12.
- ▶ A telephone survey with a random sample of 506 citizens.
- ▶ A public online survey with 742 respondents.

## Key findings of engagement:

- ▶ Calgarians deeply value their public parks and open space.
- ▶ Calgarians primarily use parks for recreational activities.
- ▶ Stakeholders view parks and open space as an opportunity to create public gathering spaces that create a sense of belonging and community.
- ▶ Citizens consistently expressed:
  - ▶ A direction for The City of Calgary to maintain and enhance current features, services and amenities in parks.
  - ▶ Concern for potential deterioration of public safety and maintenance in our parks.
  - ▶ Concern for weakened natural environments and biodiversity.
  - ▶ Concerns centered on The City of Calgary's challenges of paying for the level of maintenance, diversity and specialization of parks that Calgarians expect now and in the future.

- ▶ Calgarians recognize there are increased pressures on our parks and open space (e.g. more user groups and the need for more funding sources, community involvement and public education).
- ▶ When asked, most citizens favoured increased taxes to maintain or expand parks, rather than service cuts. This result was consistent with findings from 2011 public consultations on The City's 2012 – 2014 budget process.
- ▶ There was consistent public support during the consultations for securing new funding from corporate sponsorships and donations to maintain and enhance parks. Most participants rejected the notion of park user fees as a funding source.
- ▶ There is a desire to maintain focus on providing a wide range of types of park activities and features, such as multi-purpose parks (e.g. sport fields, playgrounds, etc.), off-leash areas, community gardens, natural areas, festival spaces, pathways, etc.
- ▶ Participants' ideas for the future typically focused on adding new or expanded features to our parks. The public strongly values basic infrastructure in parks that support park cleanliness, user safety and comfort (e.g. washrooms, benches, lighting and garbage bins).



### Well-being

A state in which an individual, group, or organization realizes their potential, can cope with normal stresses, can be productive, and is able to make a contribution to the community.

### Wellness

A condition of complete health including social, emotional, physical, mental, financial and/or environmental health.

### Vision statement

A statement that describes the preferred future state and is written in the present tense. It is a short inspirational statement that motivates people to work towards a common outcome.

### Vibrant parks

Beautiful, healthy, safe and active public spaces.



**HERITAGE & CULTURAL  
SPACES & PLACES**

**OPTIMIZED  
RESOURCES**

**NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
PROTECTION**

**INDIVIDUAL &  
COMMUNITY  
WELL-BEING**





Friends of Nose Hill Society  
Suite 171  
130 - 5403 Crowchild Trail NW  
Calgary AB T3B 4Z1

Feb. 23, 2015

Re: the *ImagineParks* 30-year planning framework and *Our BiodiverCity*, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan, on the agenda of the Standing Policy Committee for Community & Protective Services, on Wednesday, March 4, 2015.

I am writing to support, in principle, two vision documents: the *ImagineParks* 30-year planning framework and *Our BiodiverCity*, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan. Both are crucial planning instruments which will envision and make possible the maintenance, implementation, conservation, and preservation of parkland for future generations of Calgarians.

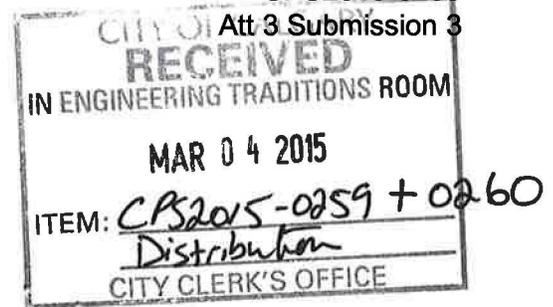
Nose Hill is to Calgary what Citadel Hill is to Halifax; Battlefield's Park to Quebec City; Mount Royal to Montreal; Stanley Part to Vancouver; and Beacon Hill Park to Victoria. This Hill is a dominant geographical feature in Calgary since its southern slopes can be seen from most locations in the City; providing a constant reminder to citizens of the prairie landscape surrounding them which has played such an influential role in our economic and cultural development.

The source for this comparison is *Re: Nose Hill, a Brief* which was presented at the "Nose Hill Hearings" to the Calgary City Council in June, 1972, respectively submitted by Calgary Local Council of Women.

The brief goes on to indicate that visitors to our City attending the "new" convention centre will probably have little opportunity to sense the unique landscape flavour of the prairie surrounding Calgary, except to visit the natural grassland of Nose Hill or to view it from a distance.

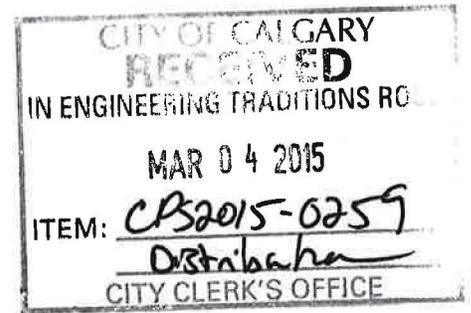
Yours truly,

Anne Burke  
President  
Friends of Nose Hill Society





URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE – CALGARY  
www.udicalgary.com



March 3, 2015

Members of Special Policy Committee  
For Community & Protective Services  
PO Box 2100 Station M  
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Dear Mayor Nenshi and City of Calgary Councillors:

Re: imagineParks, CPS 2015-0259

UDI Calgary generally supports the City of Calgary Parks' objective to set a 30-year vision and strategic planning framework for the development and management of public parks and open space, addressing long range urban sustainability and future land use and services.

For the most part, the high level aspirational language around the visioning is positive. The intent of environmental conservation, essentially retaining the asset essence and recognizing the new urban context of the future of the natural environment, is appreciated.

The UDI Calgary would express concern, however, related to the potential implementation of the imagineParks Policy through future planning decision-making.

Natural environment conservation is a desired outcome and supported however it should not be the single or highest consideration in planning and development decisions.

Those decisions should be evaluated through multiple lenses... with balanced weighting of the considerations. At a time when we are struggling with delivering affordable housing and dealing with not only the capital costs of growth but, very specifically, the maintenance and operating costs associated with that growth, we need to apply a further level of scrutiny with those planning and development decisions.

Note, the policy makes reference (p 15) to:

- implementing construction guidelines to minimize the impact on soil, protected vegetation and habitat
- implementing an alternative energy production strategy for parks and open space, for example composting, animal waste, wind power, solar energy, etc
- implementing a public art and culture guideline for parks and open space