



River Access Improvements – High Priority Projects

OVERVIEW

Recommended Capital Project Description	River Access Improvements – High Priority Projects (CPS 2017-0103)		
Executive summary	<p>The River Access Strategy addresses providing easier, safer, legal, and environmentally sustainable river access along the Bow and Elbow rivers. During investigation of the strategy, it was discovered that some urgent upgrades were required. River access sites are defined as points that can be used for both launch and egress. The rivers are integral to Calgarians’ sense of community and extremely important to the individuals, groups, and businesses that use the rivers for recreation. High priority sites have been identified based on safety issues, environmental protection, and accommodation of heavy use and demand on parks or river sites.</p> <p>High Priority River Access Upgrades would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address urgent safety and environmental concerns, while responding to high demands for use • Provide increased user access to the Bow and Elbow rivers, so that Calgarians can enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle • Promote appropriate access points (eg use river banks already damaged) to ensure protection of the healthier riparian environments • Provide better information around bylaws, safety, river conditions and more (eg with signage) • Create more economic opportunities for various businesses who provide services to help users access the river <p>This investment would allow for the development, upgrade, or formalization of 6 sites, as well as initiation of education and signage initiatives.</p>		
Expected Key Deliverables	SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY RATIONALE
	West Baker Park (Stoney Trail)	Additional parking, additional launch ramps, and installation of a wheelchair accessible fishing pier.	Demand. This site is critical to draw traffic away from Bowness Park. Parking for river access will also serve as overflow parking for Bowness Park.
	Sunnyside (Memorial Drive)	Installation of timber steps on the steep embankment.	Safety. Users have been known to be slipping and falling down this steep embankment.
	Inglewood Bridge (at 12 Street SE)	Creation of a boat egress.	Safety. This will be the only site downstream of Stoney Trail where drift boats can exit the river before hitting the Harvie Passage and weir. This site can also be used by paddle users wanting to avoid the weir.
	Albert Park (Harvie Passage)	Creation of a hand launch site.	Safety. This site will provide a visual sight line to the activity at Harvie Passage, allowing general public to call for help in case of an incident, or for emergency personnel to guide rescue operations. A feasibility study is required to determine how to access the site from 17 Ave SE/Blackfoot Trail.



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		Ogden Bridge (north tip of Refinery Park)	Creation of a boat launch.	Demand and Environment. This site provides access to fishing upstream of Graves Bridge, which is critical for the success of fishing guide operators. The site also allows for a longer stretch for fishing to take place, reducing the impact on the fish.
		Graves Bridge	Installation of lock blocks to prevent vehicles driving up and down the gravel bar.	Environment. Vehicles in or close to the river are harmful to the river environment. Alberta Environment and Parks has expressed concern about this site and could potentially shut it down.
		Signage and Education	Creation of directional and educational signage, as well as a river map.	Signage and maps will ensure safety, will protect the environment, and will satisfy users needs to be informed.
Benefits	Economic	Gross Output: 2,867,116		
		Gross Domestic Product (GDP): 1,789,588		
		Income: 866,808		
		Employment: 12		
	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community outcomes : Supports healthy, active living; Supports participation in sport and recreation activities on the river; increased safety of river access points Enhanced access to the river for public sport and recreation activities 		
	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of riverbank access sites Greater understanding and appreciation for river access and river and riparian areas 		
Return on Investment		<p>As per the Calgary River Access Strategy (CPS2017-0103), social benefits will be immediately realized as more Calgarians and tourists will be able to better participate in river recreation activities in a safe manner.</p> <p>Immediate environmental benefits will be seen with the reduction of litter and public urination due to amenities on site. With education, long term environment benefits are expected as river users continue to learn appropriate behaviours to protect our environment.</p> <p>Forecasting economic returns is challenging, however recent studies on recreational fishing allow for extrapolation of some estimates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing is a popular sport and is expected to grow to over 40,000 anglers by 2022. Each angler typically incurs almost \$2,000 a year on fishing related purchases, which would equate to an \$80 million impact to the local economy in 2022. Projections on fishing guide revenue based on a very conservative growth rate between 2.5% to 5% per year indicate an investment of \$990,000 would be recovered by the small business community before 2024. The estimates do not include revenue generated from guides not registered with the local angling association and do not include other businesses such as restaurants, hotels, vehicle shuttle operators, fish retail operations, insurance brokers, etc. One paddling store has reported that they expect as much as a 15% increase in sales due to formal access sites and improvement. In Calgary, sport tourism contributes over 50,000 hotel room nights each year. 		



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Project location	Address, Ward/ Catchment	City-wide, City-wide	Project type (MUGS)	U - Upgrade
Business Unit (BU)		Calgary Parks		
Strategic Alignment		Council Priorities	A city of inspiring neighbourhoods, A Healthy and Green City, A well run city	
		Capital Investment Plan	Resilience, Parks and Public Spaces, Culture and Entertainment District	
		Calgary Economic Development (CED) 10 year Economic Strategy: Focus	Focus: Community Energy	
		CED 10 year Economic Strategy: Strategy	Strategy One: Build Calgary as a model of sustainable development and affordable living; Strategy Two: Build and promote Calgary as a city to live a creative, active life.	
		CED 10 year Economic Strategy: Action	Action One: Direct Future Growth in a way that fosters more compact and efficient use of land, creates complete communities, allows for greater mobility choices and enhances vitality and character in local neighbourhoods. Action Two: Address greater connectivity between Calgary’s primary culture, recreation and commercial districts in the Centre City (Stampede Park to Calgary Zoo and Inglewood to Downtown West Village).	

RESILIENCE

Program / Project Assumptions	Calgary Parks will continue to receive support from Water Resources and other business units who should have input into detailed design of each site. Initial engagement has been completed for all sites. Some sites may require more engagement when addressing detailed design. It is assumed that support will still be evident from stakeholders at this stage. Addressing motorized boats within city limits is out of scope as this is a Federal regulation.
Constraints	Constructed boat launches could later be damaged by flood. Where possible sites are chosen which are not prone to flooding. Where this is not possible, it is recommended use of an inexpensive tied concrete mat. If one of these sites does flood, the capital investment loss is then minimized. Alternate sites are difficult to obtain as appropriate City owned land is limited. Addressing concerns of fecal coliform in the Elbow River, is out of scope. Apart from signage, site design cannot mitigate this concern.
Dependencies:	Most sites are dependent on approvals from the Provincial and Federal Government. Alberta Environment and Protection has indicated overall strategy appears to be satisfactory. However, there is caution that with apparent declining populations of trout, coupled with whirling disease, that the balance between access and environment is delicate and each individual access point will require critical evaluation.
Risk(s):	River users hurt due to inappropriate river use; River users continue to negatively impact the environment; Tour operators cannot operate and businesses close / tourism declines.



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PUBLIC CONSULTATION PLANS

Completed	The City reached out to external stakeholders through an online engagement program on The City’s Engage web portal from October 3 to November 30, 2016. Three hundred and nine unique visitors accessed the River Access engagement page, with 98 visitors completing an online questionnaire. Additionally visitors contributed 206 posts on three discussion forum pages (environment, river access sites and transportation).
Proposed	Some site specific consultation may still need to be completed as issues or opportunities arise during the development process. In these instances, input will be received through the Calgary River Uses Alliance.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Estimate Class	Overall project estimate has been carried out at a Class 5 level.
External Funding (Anticipated / Received)	\$275,000 of grant applications have been submitted to various agencies through The Calgary River Users Alliance. (anticipated)
Operating Impact	<p>This project will add 6 valuable river access sites to the general public. Maintenance of these sites is expected to incur operating costs which Calgary Parks will fund through realignments.</p> <p>Most costs will be due to servicing and maintenance of portable toilets and garbage cans. These items are expected to significantly decrease the amount of litter in parks. This will likely result in an operating benefit to Calgary Parks which is responsible for clean up, and for Bylaw Services who issues infraction notices.</p>