

## **Beltline Parks and Public Realm Playbook**

### **Urban Design Plans**

#### **Project Description**

The Beltline has an undersupply of parks and greenspaces for its rapidly growing population. It is home to a diverse demographic, including a high concentration of apartment dwellers, low-income residents, and people who walk or cycle as their primary transportation. As Beltline's population grows and diversifies, the demand for recreational, social, and leisure spaces continues to increase, emphasizing the need for an enhanced and resilient open space network that can support the community's evolving needs.

In response to these challenges, the Beltline Neighbourhood Association together with the City of Calgary commissioned O2 to undertake a technical analysis of the area's parks and public realm. This analysis, paired with an academic and best practice research, aimed to identify the most effective ways to increase and improve the Beltline's open space network. The resulting document, "The Playbook," integrates both qualitative and quantitative research to offer a comprehensive strategy for addressing the current open space deficiencies while remaining adaptable to future community engagement and design processes.

The Playbook's open space design concept centres around creating a connected and vibrant network of parks and public spaces. This network is based on three guiding philosophies: approaching every park and public realm area as part of a single, cohesive park experience, expanding the role of streets to provide recreational and social functions, and blending green, calming environments with lively, energetic spaces to offer diverse experiences throughout the neighborhood. These approaches directly respond to the award criteria by promoting place-making, enhancing amenity value, and fostering vibrancy in public spaces.

In terms of urban design, the Playbook emphasizes climate resilience, safety, accessibility, and inclusivity. It promotes timeless design principles that prioritize mobility and equity, ensuring that all residents, including historically underrepresented groups, benefit from future improvements. The plan also recommends a range of amenities at different scales, from high-density urban life amenities that enhance comfort and safety, to key function amenities that support social interaction, and attraction amenities designed to draw city-wide visitors. The focus on resilience and adaptability ensures that these spaces can evolve over time to meet changing social, economic, and environmental conditions, aligning with Calgary's Urban Design Review Guide.

The Playbook outlines three key moves to improve Beltline's parks and public realm. The first is to address large gap areas, where the green and vibrant networks are most lacking, and key populations are underserved. The second move focuses on leveraging synergies between parks and public spaces to maximize the impact of improvements and create a more cohesive open space network. Finally, the third move emphasizes completing the network through individual improvements to specific parks and public spaces, ensuring they contribute more effectively to the overall system.

By addressing the Beltline's unique challenges through innovative and responsive urban design, the Playbook offers a strategic approach to creating a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community. This project exemplifies how thoughtful urban design can enhance the quality of life for residents, providing valuable amenities while fostering a sense of place and belonging within the community.