

# Bow to Bluff

## Project Description

Bow to Bluff is a community-driven initiative that has transformed an underutilized series of open spaces along the Northwest C-train line in Calgary into a vibrant and inclusive corridor of diverse social activity. Initiated in 2011 through a community-secured grant, the project undertook a game-changing engagement process that pioneered many now common techniques such as sounding boards, community walks, a storefront, and interactive events. This process opened numerous possibilities for the area and formed a dedicated group eager to have the project realized.

A subsequent, City-initiated design process commenced in 2016 to reengage the community and further articulate an inclusive program for the parks. As connections with the community continued to grow, the design integration continued to grow as well. Located in a rapidly intensifying area of the city, the parks were conceived as the community's backyards featuring amenities in all seasons for diverse users. At the south end, Bow Landing Park is the largest, fronting Memorial Drive and the Bow River. Constrained by the LRT bridge, ramp, stairs, and the existing mature trees, a small skate park, gathering spaces, and community garden are woven together, coalescing seemingly disparate programs to create a highly active and well-loved space for diverse groups. Extensive perennial gardens provide pollinator habitat and winter planting interest. Under the LRT bridge, the skate park sees extensive winter use during Calgary's unique chinook weather cycles.

Harvest Park features places for gathering, playing, and sharing food. The house structures incorporate a ping pong table and barbecues, complemented by a bocce court, harvest tables, and catenary lighting. The sound barrier fence that runs along the entire corridor was refurbished with new mesh panels, lighting, and paint. Certain segments were opened visually for greater connection into the parks. At key moments, such as at Harvest Park, murals by a public artist are featured on the fence.

At the bluff end of the corridor, Play Park is focused on children's activities with a sandbox, miniature playhouses, and play mound with climbing structures and slide. A communal toy box is filled with donations from the community and was subsequently equipped with a broom and dustbin to sweep up sand, a sign of community park stewardship.

The Bow to Bluff project redefines urban spaces, fostering community connections and improving well-being. By transforming a divisive LRT corridor into vibrant parks with multi-modal pathways and inclusive spaces, the project promotes health and cultural engagement, contributing to social harmony and neighborhood well-being.

Bow to Bluff tells the stories of this place, celebrating cultural diversity through collaborations with historians, local artists, and First Nations. The incorporation of public art, interpretive programming, and cultural elements enhances the public realm, fostering inclusivity and recognizing Indigenous perspectives. This cultural celebration promotes justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, contributing to a more harmonious society.

The project prioritizes environmental stewardship by introducing green spaces, rainwater gardens, and diverse plantings along the corridor. Bow to Bluff enhances the urban environment, contributing to The City's mandates for climate adaptation by integrating nature within a highly urban setting.