



RiverWalk West

Report Back: What we Heard

August 23, 2023

Project overview

Calgary's future success relies on our downtown being a place where people want to live, visit, set up business and go to work. When our downtown thrives, Calgary thrives. As the investment and support into downtown grows, Downtown West will transition into a thriving urban neighbourhood. The western gateway to Greater Downtown will be RiverWalk West - a vibrant, high quality riverfront destination, with park and pathway amenities that connect communities and people to the Bow River and the downtown.

RiverWalk West presents an opportunity to create a unique identity and continuous public promenade connecting Fort Calgary to the west end of downtown. The redevelopment will continue the work to harmonize flood mitigation, increase stormwater improvements and upgrade the public realm required to support the growing demands for safe recreational and alternative commuter uses.

Purpose of the project

The Greater Downtown Plan identifies five strategic moves to better serve Calgarians and protect the natural edge of the Bow River:

1. Improve the Bow River promenade and pathway system from Eau Claire to 14 Street SW.
2. Create a better connection between the neighbourhood of Downtown West and the Bow River.
3. Create a better connection between the pathway and the edge of the Bow River.
4. Create more green space.
5. Consolidate and review land use for fragmented City-owned parcels.

Location

The project will extend the existing East Village and Eau Claire improvements to complete the river promenade through the downtown. The new section of the riverwalk will tie-into the work completed along the south-side of the Bow River at West Eau Claire Park and extend past 14 Street S.W. The project may include spaces adjacent to the Bow River and Bow Trail S.W.

The following map shows the existing RiverWalk and future extension:



The map below shows the future extension, RiverWalk West:





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Design competition

The City of Calgary embarked on a unique approach to conceptual design through the release of a design competition for industry professionals. Design competitions can offer many benefits to the project, the city, and to the public by encouraging a broad range of innovative solutions, and creativity to a challenging site. The RFPQ for the design competition closed in July of this year. Short-listed design teams will receive this What we Heard report and are expected to take the input provided into consideration when preparing their design concepts.

Phase 1 engagement: Inspire

For the Inspire phase, an online engagement opportunity was available July 10 – 31, 2023 at <https://engage.calgary.ca/riverwalkwest>. There were 3,865 page views during this time and 457 contributions of feedback were submitted.

Communications overview

The following communications tactics were used to inform Calgarians about the RiverWalk West project and engagement in July 2023:

- A social media campaign from July 20 – 31 (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and NextDoor). 1,860 link clicks achieved the goal of driving people to the project engage page to learn more and share their feedback. The campaign performed well with a total of 146,885 impressions. Below is an example of a Facebook post:





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- A news release went out July 25: [The City of Calgary announces investment into final west piece of Downtown River Promenade](#).
- 250 postcards* were handed out to pedestrians, businesses and residences along the river promenade the week of July 24.
- A bold sign was placed between Bow Trail S.W. and 6 Avenue S.W. directing people to the engage page.
- 7 double-sided, a-frame signage* boards were placed along the river promenade from Eau Claire to 14 Street S.W.

*Postcards and signage included information on the engagement and a QR and link to the project engage page.

What we asked

Preceding the questions asked to gather feedback, the engagement page provided information about the project, including the maps shown in the “Project overview” section of this report. This was followed by:

Provide Your Input!

Experience

The current conditions cannot support the existing and anticipated demands for the Bow River pathway. A multi-mobile separated pathway will need to be incorporated into the future design of the space to accommodate the needs of Calgarians for recreational and commuter use.

What opportunities do you see to improve the pathway and park experience of RiverWalk West?

[open text field]

Connections

The community of Downtown West is currently separated from the Bow River pathway by a major vehicular corridor.

What opportunities do you see to create better connections between the neighbourhood of Downtown West to the Bow River?

[open text field]



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Green Space

The Greater Downtown Plan indicates the reduction and/or realignment of redundant roads and the consolidation of fragmented spaces to increase the size of the river park as repurposed greenspace with active modes facilities.

What opportunities do you see to create or add green space in this area?

[open text field]

The Bow River

The Bow River provides opportunities for people to access nature in the downtown. This is a key feature for Calgary.

What opportunities do you see to connect with the Bow River?

[open text field]

Inspire Us!

Have you seen something else locally and/or somewhere else in the world that you think can inspire the design of RiverWalk West? Please share your ideas with us. You can describe your ideas below and/or include a link to more information about them below and/or upload a photo.

[open text field]

Please upload pictures here:

Other Opportunities

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the area?

[open text field]

Mapping Tool: Opportunities for RiverWalk West

We would like to know where you see opportunities in the RiverWalk West area.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Enter the location address in the search bar or zoom-in using the + / - buttons to get to a specific location.



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2. Press "Add marker" to place your marker on the map. This is where you will select your category from the choices listed below. You can add as many markers as you'd like.
3. Please ensure you click "Submit" after you place each pin.

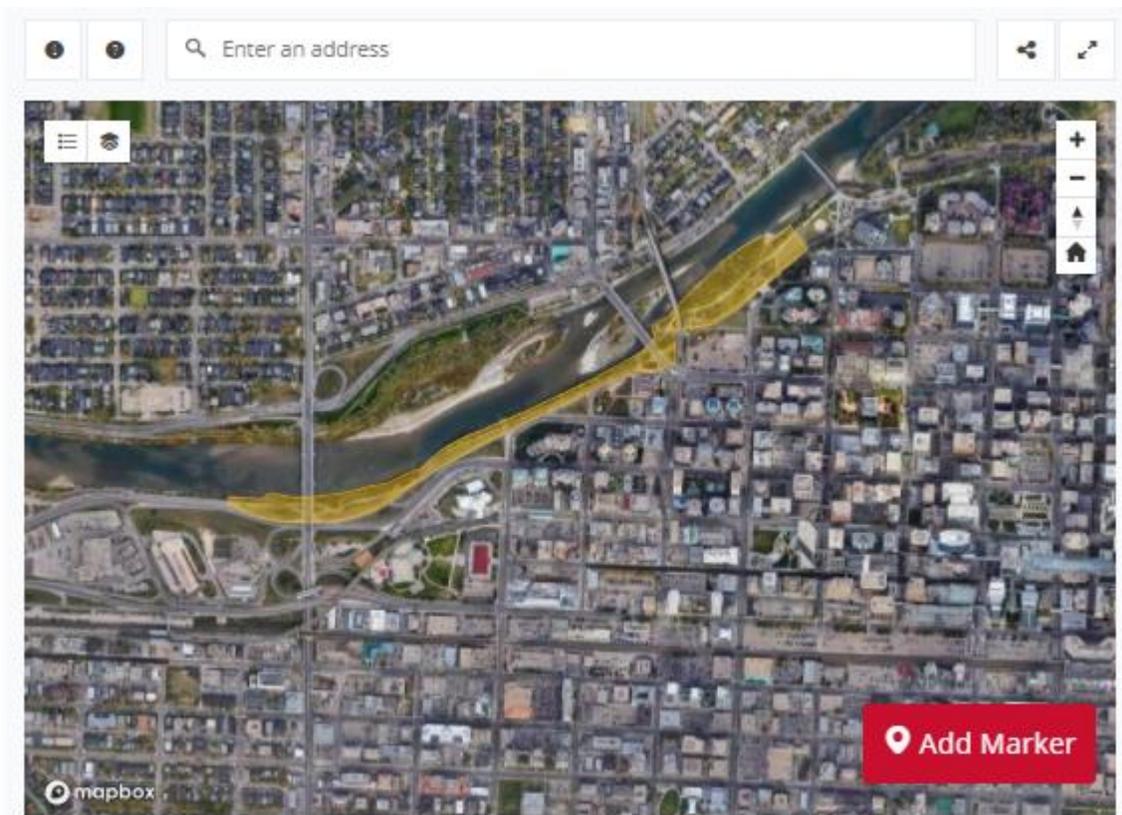
CATEGORIES

Experience: Please include in the comment for your marker the opportunity you see to improve the pathway and park experience of RiverWalk and adjacent areas.

Connections: Please include in the comment for your marker the opportunity you see to create better connections between the neighbourhood of Downtown West to the Bow River.

Green Space: Please include in the comment for your marker the opportunity you see to create added green space in this area south of the Bow River.

The Bow River: Please include in the comment for your marker the opportunity you see to better connect the Bow River.





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What we heard

Participants' responses were analyzed and organized by theme.

Provide Your Input!

Summary

The themes identified below are those that emerged from the total responses to the first four questions regarding opportunities for improving the experience of RiverWalk West and connections between Downtown West and the Bow River, adding green space to the area, and connecting with the Bow River. Themes that emerged for the specific topics of experience, connections, green space and the river are presented later in the report.

Themes	Details
Amenities, activation and recreation opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Make it a destination area that people want to visit – Add food and beverage service options (e.g., restaurants, cafés) and small retail shops/stalls and markets – More activation/programming/events/entertainment – Include amenities such as seating/benches, picnic tables/areas washrooms, and water fountains/stations – Add opportunities and suitable spaces for recreation (e.g., outdoor gym equipment, playground, beach areas, land-based recreation such as volleyball, and on-water recreation such as a surf/river wave park, boating and swimming) – Create places from which to view the river (e.g., balconies/ platforms over the water, piers) – Make it dog-friendly/incorporate Bowforth dog park into RiverWalk West
Pathways, active modes and related safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure separate lanes for walking and wheeling (to improve safety and flow) – Widen the pathways (in general) – Prioritize pedestrians, walkability and other active modes over vehicular traffic – Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety (e.g., address blind corners/spots, sharp turns, steep ramp to 14 Street bridge, speeding cyclists, confluence of pedestrians and cyclists on pathway) – Improve pathway surfaces (e.g., repave them)



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Themes	Details
Connections and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create more safer crossings/crosswalks and/or use pedestrian overpasses/bridges – Improve connections between Downtown West and the river, and from RiverWalk West to surrounding communities (e.g., Sunalta, Kensington) – Provide more and better/dedicated cycling lanes to connect RiverWalk West to Downtown West – Improve safe, easy access to the river (e.g., using steps/stairs to the water or a terraced approach), although some participants voiced a preference for not improving access to the river and leaving it as a natural, protected area
Adjacent roads/vehicular traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Close and/or divert traffic from adjacent roads such as 4 Avenue S.W., 5 Avenue S.W. and Bow Trail S.W. and use the space as park area and/or limit it to pedestrians and other active modes of transportation, although some voiced opposition to impeding vehicle movement in the area – Improve separation between the pathway and adjacent traffic (e.g., using hedges or trees)
Green space/greenery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – General support for green space in the area – Convert adjacent roads, land (e.g., area between 8 St. and 11 St. S.W.), vacant lots (e.g., former Greyhound depot) and/or parking lots (e.g., lot at the corner of 4 Ave and 8 St. S.W.) to green space – Add to and keep existing naturalized areas, use native plants, trees and grass (as opposed to manicured lawns) – Add trees (to help with shade) and greenery in RiverWalk West as well as on streets in Downtown West – Remove trees/shrubs along the river, although some would prefer they be left in place and the area kept as natural as possible – Ensure there are areas in RiverWalk West that allow for animals, insects and local species to thrive
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Concern about unhoused people, drug activity and crime in the area – Add more/better lighting and sight lines



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Experience

The themes identified below are those that emerged from the responses to the question “What opportunities do you see to improve the pathway and park experience of RiverWalk West?”

Themes	Details
Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure separate lanes for walking and wheeling (to improve safety and flow) – Widen the pathways (in general)
Adjacent roads/vehicular traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Close and/or divert traffic from adjacent roads such as 4 Avenue S.W., 5 Avenue S.W. and Bow Trail S.W. and use the space as park area and/or for pedestrians and other active modes of transportation – Improve separation between the pathway and adjacent traffic (e.g., using hedges or trees)
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Make it a destination area that people want to visit – Add food and beverage service options (e.g., restaurants, cafés) and small retail shops/stalls and markets – Include more seating/benches/rest areas
River access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve safe, easy access to and viewing of the river (e.g., seating, viewpoints, improve sightlines to the river by removing some of the trees/shrubs) – Add a surf/river wave park
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Concern about unhoused people, drug activity and crime in the area



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Connections

The themes identified below are those that emerged from the responses to the question “What opportunities do you see to create better connections between the neighbourhood of Downtown West to the Bow River?”

Themes	Details
Active modes of transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prioritize pedestrians, walkability and other active modes over vehicular traffic – Improve crossings/crosswalks to enhance safety and flow – Add pedestrian overpasses (or, less frequently mentioned, underpasses) – Add more/better cycle lanes to connect RiverWalk West and Downtown West
Adjacent roads/vehicular traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Close and/or divert traffic from adjacent roads such as 4 Avenue S.W., 5 Avenue S.W. and Bow Trail S.W. and use it as park area and/or for pedestrians and other active modes of transportation
General improvement for connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Add more and/or improve existing connections from RiverWalk West and the river to Downtown West (in general)

Green Space

The themes identified below are those that emerged from the responses to the question “What opportunities do you see to create or add green space in this area?”

Themes	Details
Opportunities to add to green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Convert adjacent roads, land (e.g., area between 8 St. and 11 St. S.W.), vacant lots (e.g., former Greyhound depot) and/or parking lots (e.g., lot at the corner of 4 Ave and 8 St. S.W.) to green space
Trees/greenery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Add/keep naturalized areas, use native plants, trees and grass (as opposed to manicured lawns) – Add trees (to help with shade) and greenery in the RiverWalk area as well as on streets in Downtown West – Some would like trees and shrubs removed from along the river (to improve views of the river and/or discourage encampments), although others would like to leave the greenery as is and keep the area as natural as possible – Ensure there are areas in RiverWalk West that allow for animals, insects and local species to thrive
General support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – General support for more green space in the area



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The Bow River

The themes identified below are those that emerged from the responses to the question “What opportunities do you see to connect with the Bow River?”

Themes	Details
Access and views	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Improve safe, easy access to the river (e.g., using steps/stairs to the water or a terraced approach), although some voiced a preference for not improving access to the river and leaving it as a natural, protected area– Create places from which to view the river (e.g., balconies/ platforms over the water, piers)– Add seating by the river– Create a beach/urban beach
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Add a surf/river wave park– Provide suitable areas for recreation (e.g., slow-moving water spaces for swimming, boat/raft launch)
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Concern about unhoused people, drug activity and crime in the area

Inspire Us!

Participants provided a wide variety of specific and general things they’ve seen locally and/or somewhere else in the world that they think can inspire the design of RiverWalk West. To view the responses, please click [here](#).

Other Opportunities

Among the roughly one-half of participants who provided a response to this question, comments generally reflected what was already mentioned in the preceding questions. Some respondents took this opportunity to express their support for the project.



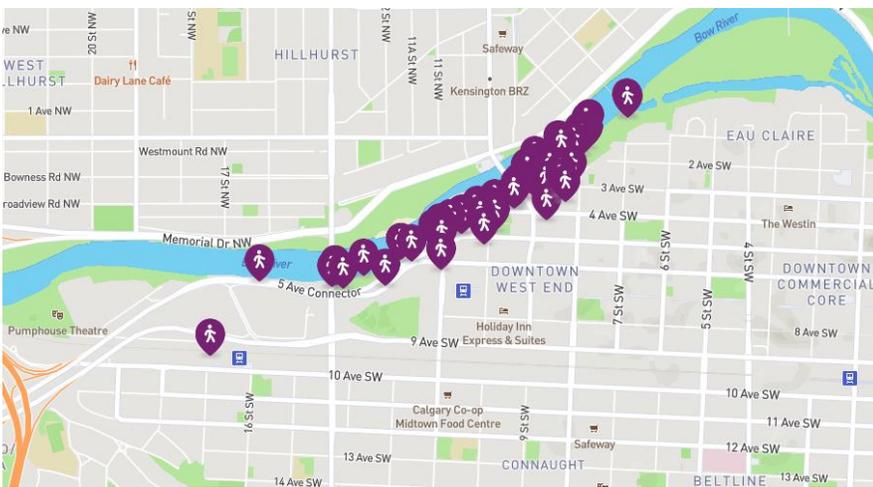
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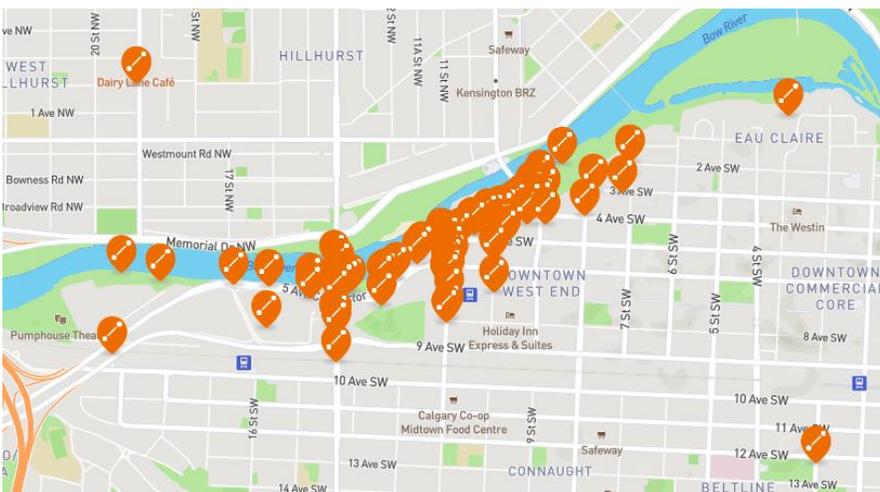
Mapping Tool

Participants were asked to place a marker on the map where they see opportunities in RiverWalk West and to explain the opportunity. Four different marker categories were provided, corresponding to those used in the previous section: Experience, Connections, Green Space and The Bow River. The live map with the markers and corresponding comments is available at <https://engage.calgary.ca/riverwalkwest>. Below are images of the marker placements for each category.

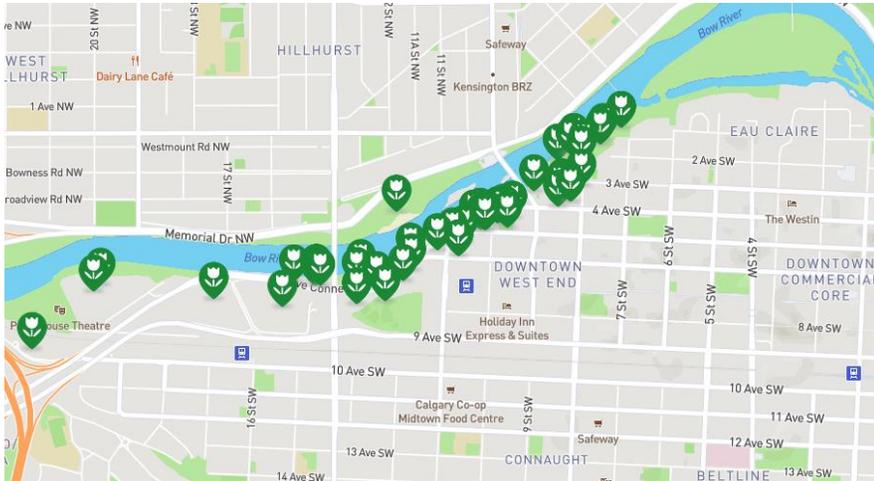
Experience



Connections



Green Space



The Bow River



Overall, comments about opportunities reflected what was heard in the previous section:

- Closure and/or diversion of traffic from adjacent roads
- Pathway improvements
- Conversion of areas to green space
- Addition of amenities
- Separate lanes for walking and wheeling
- More and/or better north-south connections
- River access and river recreation

To view verbatim comments for each marker, please click [here](#).



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Next steps

This report and the verbatim comments will be shared with the design teams short-listed for the competition. The input is to be used in preparing their design concepts. Later this year, The City will conduct engagement to gather feedback on the design concepts.

Verbatim comments

Verbatim comments include all feedback collected via the online engagement. All input has been reviewed and provided to the project team to be considered in decision making for the project. Verbatim responses are in unedited format (no changes to spelling or grammar) unless there is offensive language or inappropriate commentary, in alignment with The City of Calgary's Respectful Workplace Policy, or personal information. No other edits to the feedback have been made, and the verbatim comments are as received. As a result, some of the content in this verbatim record may still be considered offensive or distasteful to some readers. To view all verbatim responses, please click [here](#).