



2023

Edmonton community projects



**urban
design
awards**



Before, Michael Phair Park



After, Michael Phair Park

Michael Phair Park

Urban centers are freckled with utilitarian spaces and forgotten parkettes bursting with unwritten opportunities for intentional community building. These in-between spaces are blank canvases with boundless potential to connect people across cultures and social bubbles through shared experiences centered around art, gathering, and play. Michael Phair Park in downtown Edmonton was the quintessential example of this. An urban fragment diamond in the rough.

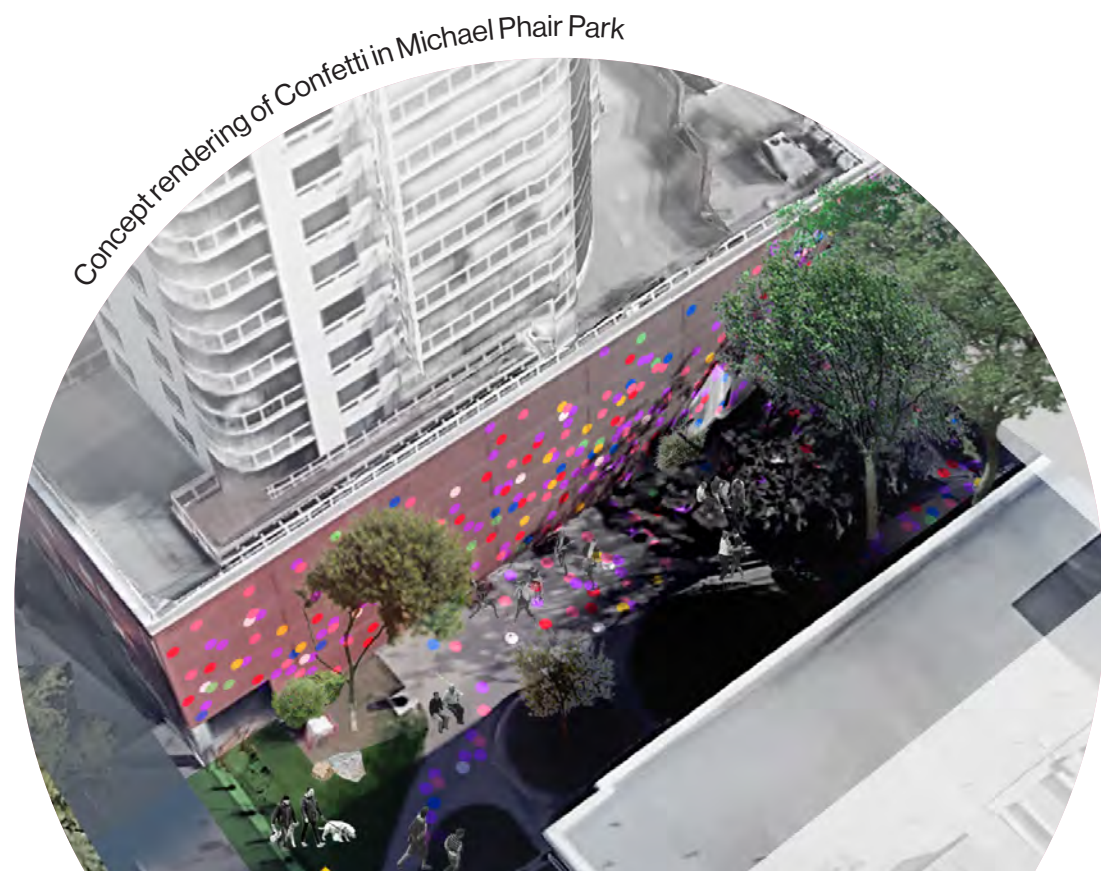
Named in 2016 after Alberta's first openly gay former City Councilor Michael Phair, the park celebrates Phair's distinguished career as a politician, an LGBTQ2Ai+ community advocate, and his many contributions to the City of Edmonton at large.

However, the original design of the park was not fully realized due to budget constraints, which resulted in the micro-park not fully achieving its potential.

In 2021 the parks renewal plan began when Phair, with full support from the Downtown Edmonton Community League and Urban Development Institute, engaged a local firm to conceptualize ways to improve the parkette. The group successfully applied for a City of Edmonton Downtown Vibrancy Strategy grant for three interventions in the park: painted murals on the adjacent building walls, a permanent stage, and overhead lighting to increase safety and extend operating hours.



Michael Phair giving opening speech at Confetti's community reveal



Concept rendering of Confetti in Michael Phair Park

Confetti

Michael Phair Park's Confetti (the first intervention) is the physical realization of Michael Phair; vibrant, playful, provocative, celebratory, impactful, and welcoming. The key to Confetti's success is its simple but undeniable ability to capture those intentions as a design byproduct of Phair's profound positive legacy, passion for community, and the mark he continues to leave on the City of Edmonton.

Confetti is thousands of equally sized circles, in 16 vibrant colours, covering the building walls that frame the park and spread across the ground, acting as an iconic unifying component of the entire park area. Their placement is explosive, performative, and random. An exuberant proliferation of colour bursting out of the park. As the paint fades with time, new circles will be added to maintain the vibrancy of the piece and hopefully inspire other areas of the City to reflect Michael's wide ranging impact across Edmonton by adding a little colour.

Big City Moves

What was once a forgettable shortcut is now a community hub for formal and informal gathering; Confetti Fridays, dog photoshoots, a lunch spot for weekend warriors. Confetti brought Michael Phair Park to life with an explosion of colour. The once anonymous urban parkette now defines an intentional place in the city's core in celebration and support of the LGBTQ2Ai+ community. An example of radical placemaking to keep the city full of energy.

Confetti early concept development



Confetti Friday in Michael Phair Park



Michael Phair Park with Confetti mural



Stanley A. Milner Library Renewal



FIG 1

On Edmonton's Winston Churchill Square, the dynamic new Stanley A. Milner Library ignites the cultural civic square by stretching out and opening up toward nearby landmarks.

The Stanley A. Milner Library Renewal was conceived to reimagine and reshape the existing library as a physical expression of EPL's forward-thinking values and civic role—The Library of the Future. The building's skin and circulation orchestrate the experience of the library. The multi-storey atrium creates a variety of inspiring spaces, interconnects multiple program spaces and destinations, woven together by an intuitive and accessible circulation path. With 21st century library amenities including a third space, large galleria spaces, café, children's library, makerspace, teaching kitchen and an Indigenous gathering space (designed in collaboration with local Cree Elders) the renewed building supports the library's position as a social and creative hub.

Inspiration for the dynamic exterior began with the desire for the new "skin" of the building to be more than a cosmetic application. Introduced as a continuous wrap around the building, the new skin was offset and stretched off the original building making visual connections to adjacent landmarks. By stretching and opening out to the City, a meaningful relationship is created where the surrounding urban environment helps shape the life of the Library and vice versa. As part of the renewal, an accessible, civic plaza space was restored, a new public galleria connects Sir Winston Churchill Square and Centennial Square, and connections to the new LRT station inside and out.

Sustainability was an integral component of the design of the renewed library. For the creation of a highly durable, high-performance envelope a zinc metal was chosen to work with the form of the building and reflect the timelessness of the design.

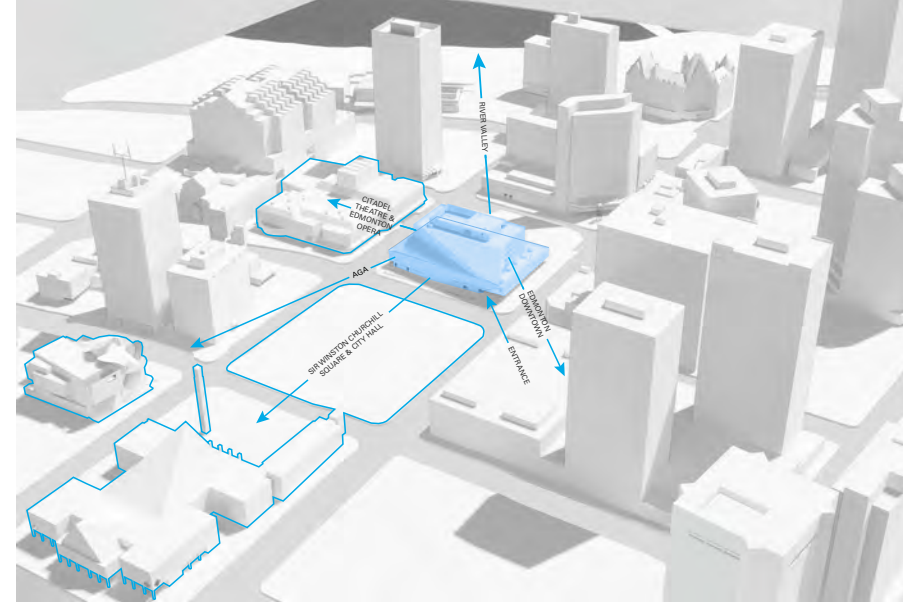


FIG 2

The building's outward-looking form maximizes visual connections to adjacent buildings and public spaces.



FIG 4

Key moments of transparency, coloured skylights, glazing panels and EPL signage, combined with a new plaza with clear views into the library's programming, invite the public inside.



FIG 3

The renewed library is a welcoming portal between Sir Winston Churchill Square to the north and Centennial Square to the south in the heart of downtown Edmonton.



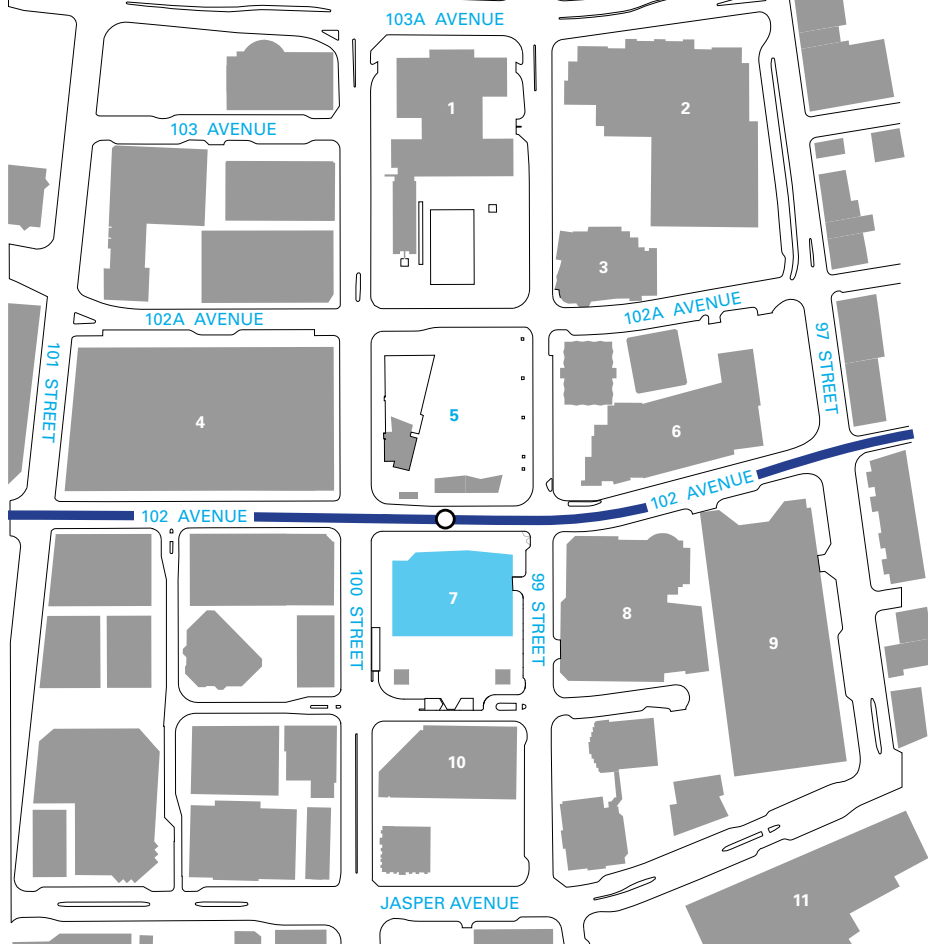
FIG 5

View of the exterior north entry plaza. On the ground floor, a colourful galleria seating area provides users with views of the bustling city and entices passersby to enter the building.



FIG 6

The renewal activates the civic space around the building and provides a new gateway to Centennial Plaza to the south.



Legend

- | 1 | City Hall
 - | 2 | Law Courts
 - | 3 | Art Gallery of Alberta
 - | 4 | Edmonton City Centre
 - | 5 | Sir Winston Churchill Square
 - | 6 | Winspear Centre
 - | 7 | Stanley A. Milner Library Renewal
 - | 8 | Citadel Theatre
 - | 9 | Canada Place
 - | 10 | Westin Hotel
 - | 11 | Shaw Conference Centre
- Valley Line LRT
 - Churchill Station



CONTEXT PLAN

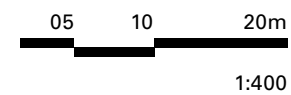
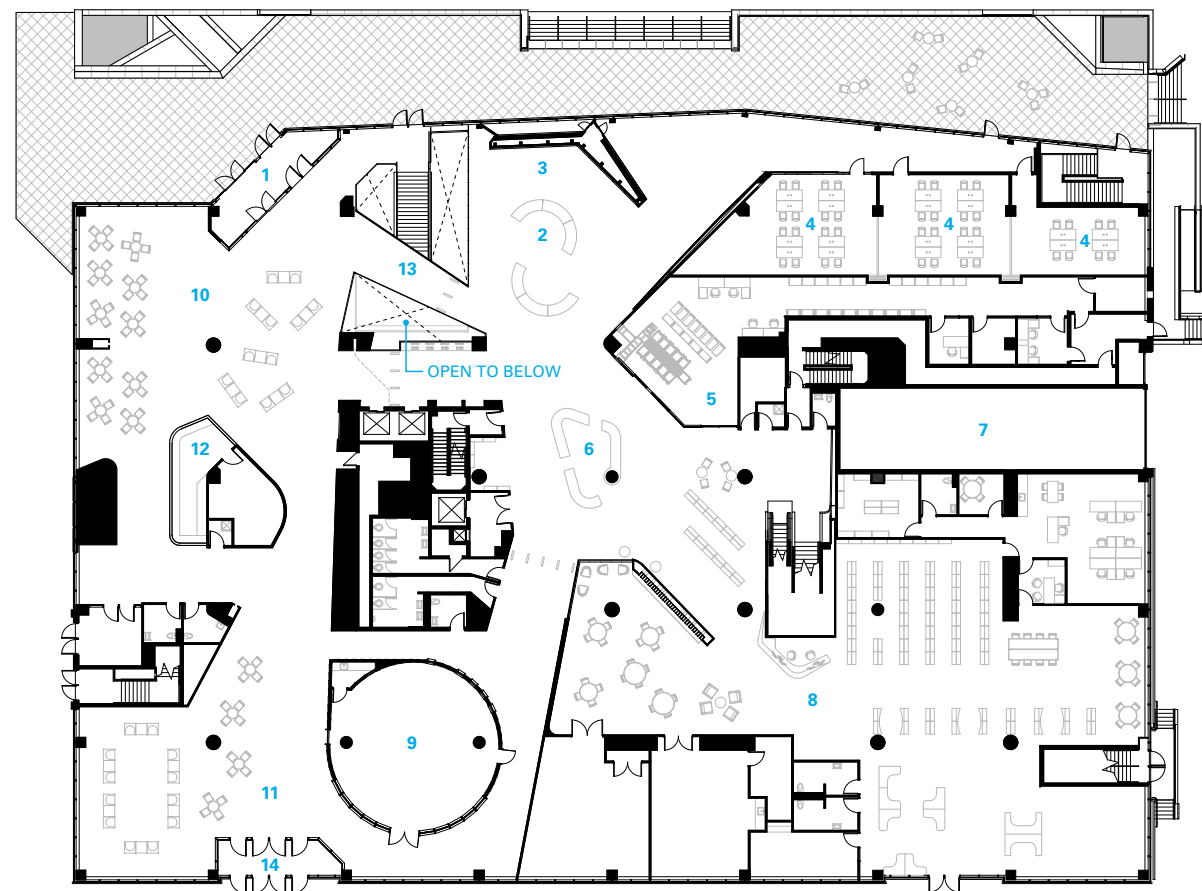


FIG 7

Context Plan: Taking advantage of the building's prominent location in Edmonton's city centre, the renewed building actively supports the library's position as a key social and creative hub.



Legend

- | 1 | North Entrance
- | 2 | Multi-storey Atrium
- | 3 | Digital Wall
- | 4 | Programs Room
- | 5 | Sorting Room
- | 6 | Service Desk
- | 7 | Loading Dock
- | 8 | Children's Library
- | 9 | Indigenous Gathering Space
- | 10 | North Galleria
- | 11 | South Galleria
- | 12 | Future Café
- | 13 | Entrance Bridge
- | 14 | South Entrance



GROUND FLOOR

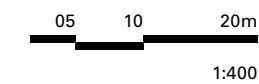


FIG 8

Ground Floor Plan: The reimagined interior spatial organization features a variety of dramatic and inspiring spaces that enhance visual interconnection. Visitors now enter into a bright and welcoming six-storey atrium defined by a sweeping new "reading ramp".



FIG 9

The building's southwest corner; the exterior is in dialogue with the city, inviting users inside.

FIG 10

The new building envelope is composed of durable, high-performance zinc with generous expanses of glazing. Its dynamic form was conceived to relate directly to its urban context—literally stretching out and opening up toward nearby landmarks. The building's skin in turn shapes a network of intuitive circulation paths and inspiring new spaces.

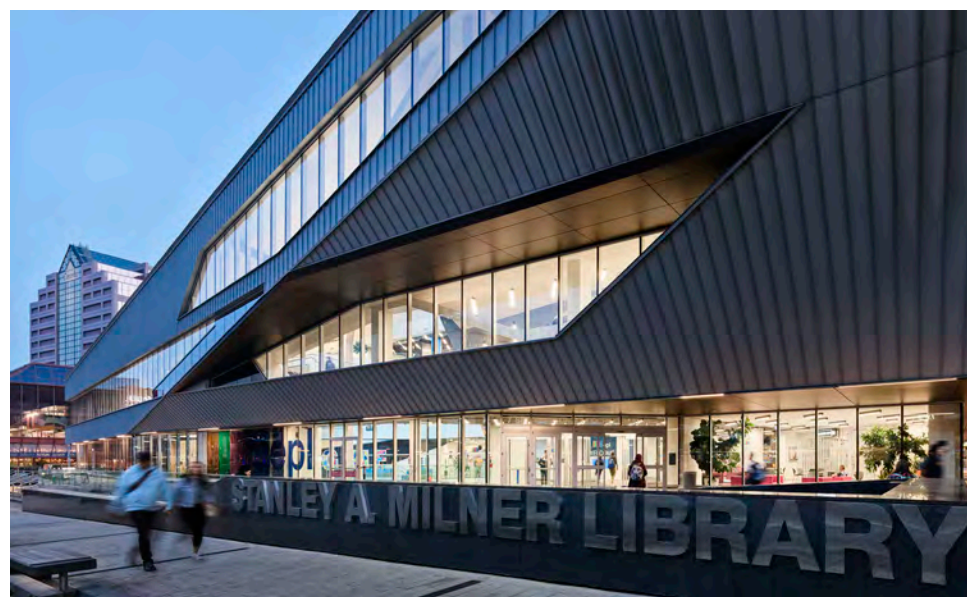
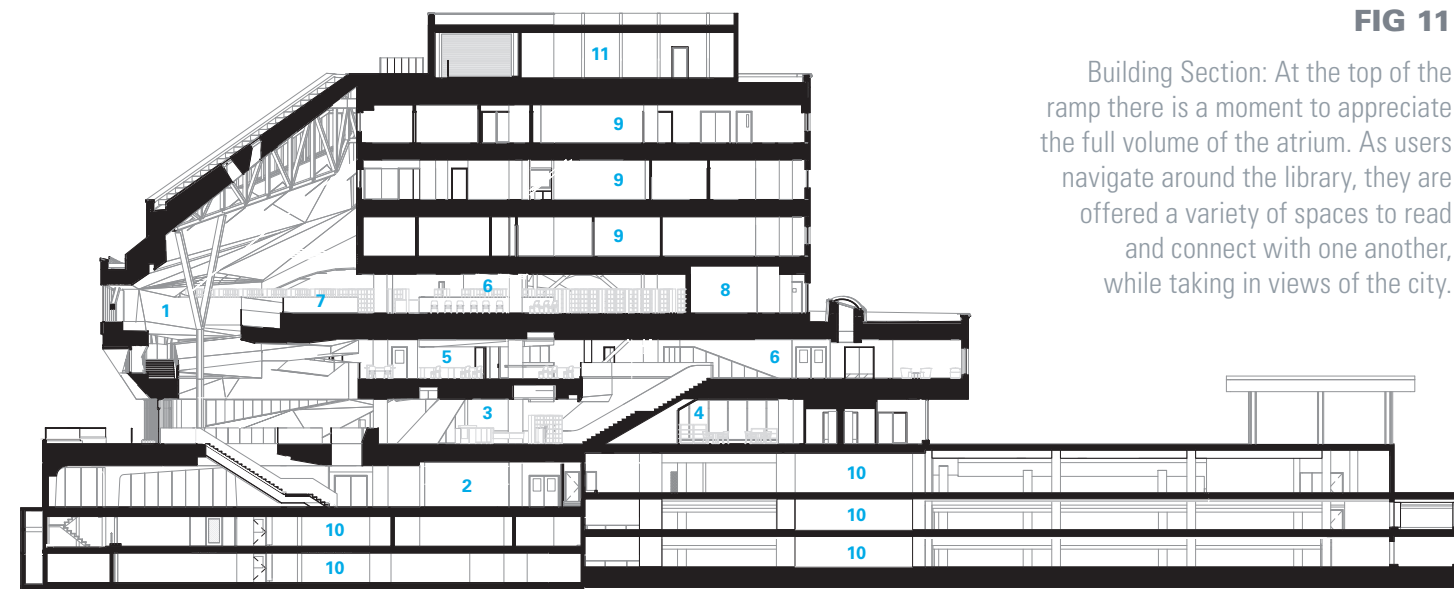


FIG 11

Building Section: At the top of the ramp there is a moment to appreciate the full volume of the atrium. As users navigate around the library, they are offered a variety of spaces to read and connect with one another, while taking in views of the city.



NORTH-SOUTH BUILDING SECTION



Legend

- | 1 | Atrium
- | 2 | Theatre Lobby
- | 3 | Circulation Desk
- | 4 | Children's Library
- | 5 | Computers
- | 6 | Collection
- | 7 | Civic Room
- | 8 | Daycare
- | 9 | Offices
- | 10 | Parkade
- | 11 | Mechanical Room



Whitemud Equine Centre *community project*

Prominently situated in Edmonton's River Valley, the site operated as a farmstead until it transitioned into public space, resulting in a setting that is unique for being both pastoral and urban. The site has a rustic charm and a serene agrarian atmosphere, yet it now sits within the developed city alongside a major commuter road.

The Whitemud Equine Centre offers equine activities including lesson programs for children and adults. With programs serving approximately 1,000 visitors each week, the facility provides therapeutic services for people living with mental health issues or physical disabilities, and helps

young people develop self-confidence with learning opportunities in veterinarian studies or equine sport. Inclusive design principles were paramount, as the facility programming included regular use by children and riders using wheelchairs. The project exceeded code requirements and best practices by creatively applying barrier-free principles to a type of building that typically does not apply them. Numerous custom design elements support this programming, including gates and cranes that assist with moving users from wheelchair to horseback. The new building consists of an indoor riding arena, spectator seating, stables, a classroom, and public washrooms. The facility is designed to accommodate barrier-free accessibility and is regularly used by children and riders with disabilities.

The design organizes the public spaces and stables as distinct volumes framing the central riding arena. Public spaces are positioned facing the road, while the stable spaces are adjacent the riverside paddocks. Similar to the unique site, the building design seeks to situate itself between urban and rural. The design continues traditions of old agrarian building, using contemporary building techniques. A simple approach to the exterior design, with an emphasis on utility, includes a polycarbonate clerestory panels. In the winter the sunlight passively heats the arena space, eliminating the need for gas heating. For summer months, automated operable windows provide passive cooling to supplement mechanical airflow. After dark the diffuse illumination of upper volume signals activity within to those passing by.



INTERIOR BARRIER-FREE ACCOMMODATIONS



BUILDING IN CONTEXT OF THE PUBLIC REALM



PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION AT ENTRANCE



EXTERIOR PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

Beaumaris Lake Open Space

Built in the late 1970s, Beaumaris Lake is Edmonton's first and largest stormwater lake. The lake serves as both a stormwater management facility and a recreation destination for residents and visitors. A complete rehabilitation of the public spaces surrounding the lake was completed in 2022. The redevelopment features a series of parks and plazas, nine viewing points, and a promenade, connected by over two kilometers of shared-use pathways.

The West Park is the outdoor hub of the community, with a winding accessible path and a grand staircase connecting the lakeside promenade to the nearby library and shopping precinct. A water feature anchors this civic space and provides an opportunity for informal play.

A more formal space, the Promenade has wood-like paving and feature walls with seating and planting. The façade of the wall also received a refresh with a contemporary composite material and bespoke locally manufactured railing.

Rest areas feature signage and space for fitness activities. New finishes and furnishings throughout, as well as new lighting, reinvigorate and will sustain Beaumaris Lake Open Space.



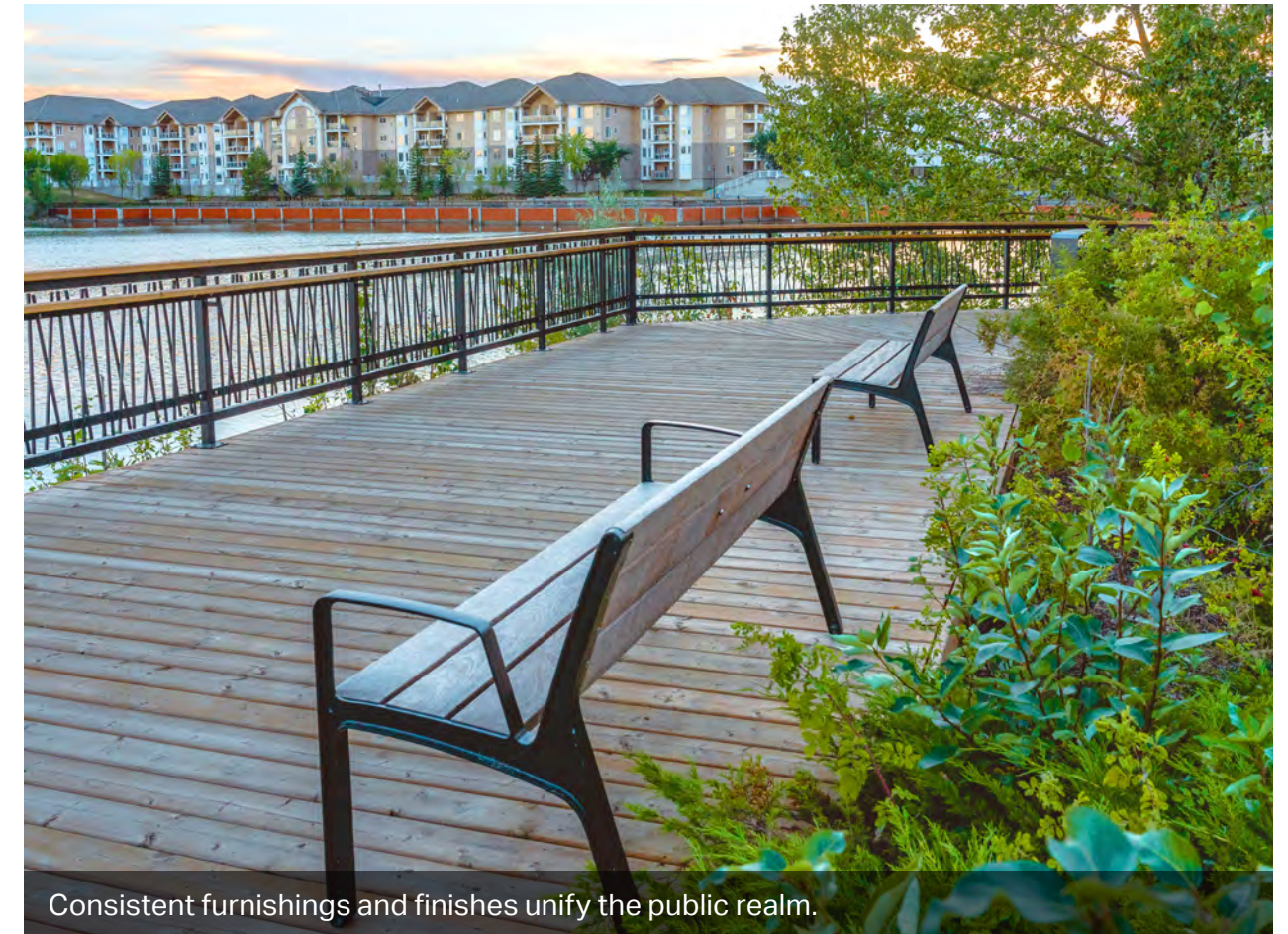
Fine detailing on the Promenade, paving, concrete, steel, and wood.



The community is reconnected to the lake via the East Park.



Integration of exemplary public realm, contemporary built forms and environmental design, A Rebuildable City.



Consistent furnishings and finishes unify the public realm.



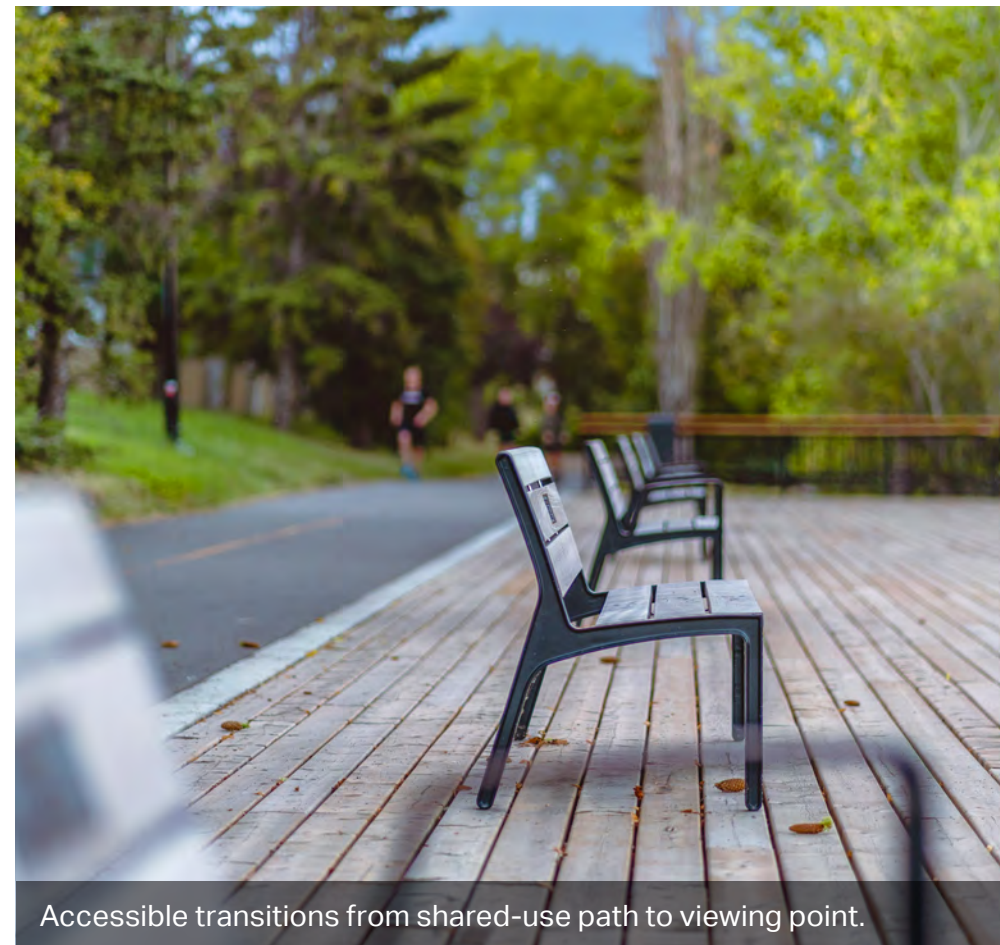
The low and meandering concrete walls provide informal play and create a stunning terrace to the lake edge.



The contemporary façade and bespoke railing sets the stage for the Promenade.



The planting design responds to the riparian lake edge planting.



Accessible transitions from shared-use path to viewing point.

Low impact development was integrated via hard and soft material selection, protection of the lake and surrounding habitat, bioswales, and an overall reduction in hardscape. Interpretive signage provides information on the local environment and function of the stormwater management facility.

The project team is incredibly proud to have delivered the public realm vision developed early in the project with the community: *"to provide a high quality, natural environment that supports healthy living by offering opportunities for: tranquility and rest, wildlife and stormwater management education, community gathering, and physical activity."* Since completion, the City has received positive feedback from visitors – including *"great job!"* and appreciation for the *"overall feel and look of the place."*

Big City Move: A Rebuildable City

"As Edmonton's population grows, it is important that older as well as newer neighbourhoods purposefully adapt to future change and enable ongoing redevelopment" (City Plan, page 160). Due to its age and success as a community amenity, the open space was deteriorating, causing aesthetic and safety issues. The Beaumaris Lake Open Space rehabilitation embodies Rebuildable City principles by recreating and transforming the beauty, safety and capacity of the open space for current and future generations.

Project Name: Tawatinâ Bridge



Photos of Tawatinâ bridge by Cole Crane (Indigenality Photography)

Design narrative

Edmonton's 260-metre Tawatinâ Bridge features more than 500 paintings of the surrounding river valley's flora and fauna, and the First Nations, Métis, and settler histories of the area. Bridging the city, the series of acrylic paintings on Dibond vary in size from 6" for the smallest painting all the way up to 4' x 24' for the largest painting. The overall dimensions of the installation are 5 x 250 metres. Together the paintings show the intertwined lives of the people and the non-human beings who live and travel through here. The artist's meetings with First Nations Elders, knowledge keepers, and Métis citizens, and numerous visits to the valley since childhood, are the backbone of these paintings. The huge

expanse and collage-like format of the work allowed the artist to combine a variety of images that would not suit a conventional mural.

Visitors may spot well-known images and symbols such as sturgeon, sweetgrass, a beaver in Hudson's Bay colours, a Métis Red River Cart, feathers and beadwork patterns. They may also discover more mysterious emblems and imagery that inspire them to learn more.

The artist explains that each picture is a prompt to storytelling: "There are well-known histories, lesser-known family tales, sacred stories, hidden messages, and provocative combinations. The images are for everyone, but the stories belong to those who know,

keep, and share them. I have heard the stories but will not write them down. They are not mine to share. I hope their keepers will visit here, share their stories, and make these paintings live."

The bridge itself represents the connection between two Edmonton communities separated by the North Saskatchewan river – Cloverdale and Riverdale. To celebrate the opening of the bridge and the reconnection of these two neighbourhoods, the community hosted an event on the bridge, which included a smudging ceremony and artist talk, to introduce the local community to the artwork and some of its stories.

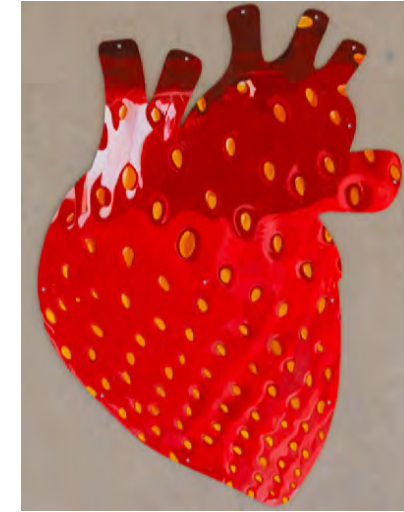


Special recognition:

How this project aligns with the Big City Moves of the City Plan

Helping to foster "a community of communities," the Métis artist worked with a variety of stakeholders and cultural organizations to gather stories that were then translated into paintings. Community consultation was paramount throughout the process and the final artworks demonstrate inclusivity and stories spanning many individuals, organizations and histories. The artworks are a visual index to Indigenous story, history, and knowledge that can be unpacked and given voice by story keepers for years to come.

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