

Connect: Calgary's Parks Plan

Questions from Community Associations April 14th, 2025 Presentation

April 30, 2025

Description

Over the past three years, Calgary's Open Space Plan (adopted by Council in 2002) has undergone a comprehensive review and rewrite, resulting in the development of *Connect: Calgary Parks Plan*. *Connect* is a high-level plan that will guide the planning, development, and management of Calgary's park system, ensuring it remains healthy, well-connected, and accessible for all Calgarians. *Connect* addresses evolving challenges within the park system, while enhancing operational and management efficiencies through data-driven decision-making.

More information and the draft plan can be found at engage.calgary.ca/parksplan.

Questions and comments shown in *italics* were submitted by Community Association representatives during the April 14th, 2025 *Connect* presentation.

Community Associations Registered and in attendance: Crescent Heights, Hawkwood, Haysbroro, Brentwood, Rutland Park, Spruce Cliff, Highland Park, University Heights, Park Hill Stanley Park, Rosemont, Hillhurst-Sunnyside, Inglewood, Acadia, North Haven, Banff Trail, Bowness, Elbow Park, West Hillhurst, Bridgeland Riverside.

Community Associations Registered but did not attend: Killarney-Glenarry, Hounsfield Heights Briar Hill, Copperfield, Pineridge, Millican Ogden.

Why is *Connect* needed?

Calgary's Open Space Plan was approved in 2002, and in the 23 years since a lot has changed, including management and design best practices, as well as provincial and federal legislation. Currently our practices are out of step with the outdated policies in the Open Space Plan. Calgary is also growing, and the needs and expectations that Calgarians have of the parks system continue to evolve. So, it's time for our policies to meet current standards, align with other policies, more effectively support Parks & Open Spaces operations, and address the expectations of Calgarians.

What is *Connect*?

"What department spearheaded this plan?"

"It might be just me, but this seems to be such a high-level document that I simply do not understand the implications for my community. We are trying to get involved, but I have no idea what I could pass on to any residents? Residents in my community will want to know exactly what the impacts on them will be, ex., Park spaces along John Laurie Blvd. which are actually zoned R-C1, then now R-CG."

Parks and Open Spaces, in collaboration with internal and external partners and input from Calgarians, drafted the *Connect Plan*. *Connect* is a city-wide, high-level policy plan that introduces a new framework for the planning, development and management of Calgary's park system over the next 20 years. It will guide future park master plans and community investment plans, along with the delivery of public spaces and landscape approvals. *Connect* also provides updated, forward-looking direction for future capital investments, park system planning, and Parks & Open Space operations. *Connect* introduces a modernized policy and operational approach that addresses the needs of Calgarians by supporting mental and physical health, conserving the environment, fostering community connections and delivering operational value.

Responding and actioning feedback from Calgarians, *Connect* provides direction focused on four key areas:

- Protecting and enhancing environmentally significant areas (wetlands, grasslands, tree stands) while focusing on the planting of native species and growing the urban tree canopy in Calgary.
- Preparing our parks for future growth by increasing the minimum size of parks in new communities and adding a broader variety of amenities to parks in established communities.
- Providing welcoming spaces for all Calgarians in the way we design and consider amenities for parks. This also includes creating more volunteer opportunities and close partnerships with community groups.

- Enhancing management and maintenance of park spaces by refreshing and standardizing the funding and care of parks through smart, data driven decision making on how and where to target our efforts. This is the long-term plan for our shared public green spaces.

How often will **Connect** be updated?

Connect should be reviewed and amended every three years to incorporate administrative updates emerging trends, implementation progress and policy gaps. Regular reviews of **Connect** will allow The City to evaluate changes impacting the park system and adjust policies and operational actions if necessary. This will ensure that **Connect** remains relevant over time.

How will **Connect** guide Area Redevelopment Plans & Local Area Plans?

"Previously ARPs included charts with active, passive, non-functional, and regional parks included with a total in hectares included beside each. It was clearly stated regional and non-functional spaces did not contribute to the MDP metric of 2 hectares per 1000 residents. The map on page pg30 of the new parks plan describes all four lumped into one colour on the map, misrepresenting the total number of hectares in each community. Given new LAPs are not describing hectares. How will residents have an understanding for how many hectares are in their community in relation to the MDP metric?"

"What is the process for parks zoned R-CG or residential being changed to Municipal Reserve?"

Connect provides direction for the development and the management of the park system in Calgary, and outlines how parks should be built or rebuilt by The City in established areas and how parks should be developed in new communities.

Connect aligns with the current Municipal Development Plan, supports park system planning in Local Area Plans, and provides the detailed policy needed to support planning applications, including outline plans. Once approved, the policies in **Connect** will help guide the creation and review of new planning documents, including Area Structure Plans (ASP), Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP), Local Area Plans (LAP), and Outline Plans.

Local park provision metrics are typically not included in LAPs and ARPs because they are dynamic, changing with population shifts and modifications to the parkland base (e.g., through new reserve dedication in brownfield redevelopment). Concurrently with **Connect**, a geodatabase has been developed to store park provision data, which will be consistently updated. This will provide greater certainty about each community's parkland and support more informed decision-making during future LAP reviews.

Municipal Reserve land is a *legal* designation stemming from the provincial Municipal Government Act. Land uses, which are assigned by The City, are a separate consideration and are approved by Calgary City Council. Parks with residential land uses can also be designated as municipal reserve. Land use adjustments are handled by Planning & Department Services, not Parks & Open Spaces. During the 2024 [Rezoning for Housing Project](#), Council directed Administration to review and address the protection of parks that are zoned with a residential land use. Planning is currently working on this, and it is expected that it will be addressed with the new Zoning Bylaw in 2026-2027.

Connect includes policy direction stating that parks should not be disposed of or repurposed unless the land's size, shape, or location makes it unsuitable for park use; and/or repurposing may be considered if another use is deemed a higher priority by The City, provided there is no net loss of park functionality within the existing catchment area (e.g., another park space is acquired nearby).

How does Calgary Plan fit with **Connect**?

"There have been major changes to the MDP targets in the draft Calgary Plan. Can you comment in the impact of this for parks?"

Connect and Parks & Open Spaces related policies within Calgary Plan were developed in tandem. The Calgary Plan introduces high-level policies for Calgary's future growth and development, including guidance for parks and open spaces, while **Connect** builds on that direction with more detailed policies and operational actions specifically focused on the park system.

Connect's policies are still consistent with the existing Municipal Development Plan (MDP) which provides the formal policy foundation for park system planning. Although **Connect** was developed in tandem with the Calgary Plan, its direction is fully aligned with the MDP and does not rely on the Calgary Plan to proceed to Council approval. Once the Calgary Plan replaces the MDP (anticipated in 2026), Calgary Plan will then provide support to **Connect's** policies.

Some minor adjustments will be made to ensure consistent terminology between *Connect* and the MDP (e.g., definitions for terms like parks, open spaces, and park system). These will be addressed at the Infrastructure and Planning Committee on May 14, 2025.

Over three years of engagement, Calgarians shared a strong desire for a more connected, accessible, and resilient park system. Delaying the implementation of *Connect* would postpone the benefits of this work. For example, four Area Structure Plans (ASPs) are in progress or planned for early 2026. Without *Connect*, these plans may miss the opportunity to incorporate its guidance. It could also limit how parks in established communities are planned and funded and prevent *Connect* from informing The City's next four-year budget cycle.

Both the MDP and Calgary Plan include a target of providing 2.0 hectares of open space per 1,000 residents in established areas outside of the Greater Downtown. *Connect* uses updated terms but reinforces the same goal: "The target for local park provision in a community is 2 hectares per 1,000 people." This aligns with the Calgary Plan's language: "Local area plan areas, except for the Greater Downtown, should have access to two hectares of local park space per 1,000 people."

How do other levels of government and community organizations fit within *Connect*?

"Wouldn't a federal climate plan for protection of greenspace, and trees, natural areas, etc. be overarching of this proposed plan?"
*"Will Parks Foundation grants align with *Connect* objectives?"*

Connect replaces the *Open Space Plan* and aligns with provincial-level policies and legislation, including the *Municipal Government Act*, *Land Use Policies*, the *Historic Resources Act*, and the *South Saskatchewan Regional Plan*.

In Canada, land use planning, parks, and natural area management primarily fall under provincial and municipal jurisdiction. The federal government plays a supportive role by setting national targets (e.g., for biodiversity or carbon sequestration), providing funding and incentives, and establishing high-level standards (e.g., for climate resilience and conservation). However, the responsibility for implementation and on-the-ground decisions remains with provinces and municipalities.

Connect aligns with relevant federal directions and programs where applicable, such as Canada's [2 Billion Trees Program](#), the national tree-planting initiative.

As part of the Parks Foundation's capital review process, The City's current policies are considered, and once approved, *Connect* will be included in their review framework.

How has *Connect* integrated park metrics?

"Why was 400 metres then was chosen for the Plan?"
"Will the 2 ha per thousand be clearly spelled out in this document in terms of park space. Amount of space needs to be tied to population for sure and should not drop below the 2 ha/1000. Established communities are under siege as amenities/park space are being lost and density is being increased significantly. Is The City planning on buying up chunks of property to turn them into parks in the established areas?"
"Is any of this information or data available to the public through the parks map?"
"If small local 'pocket' parks are inefficient to maintain, what are you proposing should happen to them?"
"Where can residents find charts for their parks and assess hectares so they know as development occurs where these hectares are being lost, so they can be sure the MDP metric is being upheld? For example, in Bowness we are losing R.B. Bennett, there are other school yard properties zoned residential, and we have lost a playground that was on the parks map. Where can residents find this data in hectares for their parks?"
"Can you please confirm the elements the Parks plan will have prescriptive domain?"

Each of the policy chapters in *Connect* begins with a list of intended outcomes. These are long-term objectives to be met over the next 20 years through the implementation of *Connect*'s policies and operational actions. Chapter 7 outlines the 25 metrics that will be used to evaluate how the strategic directions are measured, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to inform future decision-making.

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and the incoming Calgary Plan include park provision metrics which target 2 hectares of local park space per 1,000 people. *Connect* refines this target and how it is measured by using community boundaries as the scale, enabling a better response to the local context. Park space is measured differently in Greater Downtown. The historical development of the Greater Downtown area as a commercial office

space and tourism destination meant that its parks were developed to support more intensive regional use. As residents of downtown share these parks with other visitors, both regional and local park space is part of the quantity calculation.

In *Connect*, park quantity is measured by hectares of park space per 1,000 people within community boundaries:

- Adequate land provision of park space in a community is 2 hectares per 1,000 people.
- Adequate land provision of park space (local and regional) in the Greater Downtown is 1 hectare per 1,000 people.

Park access is measured based on proximity to the three park functions and multifunctional parks, which include regional parks. A park is considered multifunctional if it contains amenities or features from at least two of the three key park functions: recreation, sport, and environment. *Connect* sets a target that all residences should be within a 400-metre pedestrian trip, approximately a 5–10 minute walk, of a multifunctional park. This target aligns with best practice guidelines and other City catchment standards.

Gaps in access to multifunctional parks can be addressed through park development and acquisition, capital investments in existing parks, and improvements to pedestrian and pathway connections. Because acquiring land in established neighbourhoods is often difficult, it is essential to identify park provision gaps early in the planning process to respond to population growth and shifting demographics. The identification of these gaps is not intended to restrict growth, but rather to ensure parks are enhanced where provision targets cannot be met. Gaps may be addressed through a variety of approaches, such as converting public land, establishing temporary park uses, or improving amenities in existing parks.

While expanding the park system is the preferred way to address shortfalls in park quantity, this is not always feasible in developed areas due to limited land availability. In such cases, *Connect* includes policies aimed at improving the multifunctionality, capacity, and durability of existing parks and their amenities.

For smaller local parks, the intent is to enhance them where possible. If enhancements are not feasible due to size constraints, the goal is to protect them and evaluate how their functions complement other nearby parks—ensuring overall functionality is addressed at the broader community scale.

What's included in local park calculations? Are school sites included?

"Do you include school sites in open spaces /green space calculation?"

"I understand that school sites (playing fields etc) are included, but why are the buildings? They do not allow general public access and are not outside recreation facilities. Has this been considered in the data?"

"Regional parks were never included in the 2 ha/1000 of open space in the past. Is the intent to include these regional parks in the new calculations?"

Local park provision calculations include neighbourhood parks, sub-neighbourhood parks, linear parks, joint use sites (such as school sites), and community association sites. For joint use sites, both the sports field envelope and the building envelope are included, as they are acquired through the same process: municipal reserve dedication, which occurs during land subdivision.

Regional parks, natural areas, and environmental reserve lands are not included in local park provision calculations. These spaces serve broader catchment areas and are typically established on an opportunity basis, depending on geographic context. As a result, they are not present in every community and are considered in addition to the minimum local park allocation.

How will data associated with Connect be used in the future?

"Is there data that shows how far people will walk/ drive for a park/specific activity?"

"You keep talking about data driven decision making? What data? Who will be collecting data or providing feedback?"

"Do you track and report usage rates for parks?"

In conjunction with the development of *Connect*, Parks & Open Spaces has developed a new geodatabase that will allow us to visualize and understand access to parks better than we have in the past. The result is mapping that enables analysis of walking access to each of the park three functions (sports, recreation, environment) from each residential address in the city. This will enable The City to better identify gaps in access to specific functions and better

position us to improve parks where the positive impact will be greatest. Research generally states that local parks are more successful when they are easily accessible by pedestrian trip, which is why *Connect* uses a 400m access distance, which equates to a 5-10 minute walk. The City develops the access data based on an inventory of existing amenities within parks.

In addition, the geodatabase now better enables Parks & Open Spaces to track park provision in terms of parks per capita (hectares of parks /1000 people). This will enable The City to respond more effectively to growth in making decisions on potential land acquisitions or park improvements. Administration is currently investigating ways find a reliable methodology to accurately and consistently collect park usage data.

How is Green Space addressed in *Connect*?

"What is the process if some green space surrounding the CA facility is also a good prospect for facility expansion in response to rising demand in the community?"

"How does this plan reconcile that natural areas are often left to degrade? City plans or strategies don't seem to match what is occurring on the ground. Edworthy Park Natural Space Area is an example of this; for example, the expansion of informal trail network due to lack of plan/vision."

"How will wildlife corridors be maintained/monitored/enhanced after being established? Has funding been allotted for this?"

"Will Connect advocate for neglected green space IF it is passed?"

Connect strives to protect existing park space. Facility expansion to support community association needs would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis including a review of the community association's license of occupation boundaries. Community association sites are highly valued spaces within the park system and are intended to give communities the space they need to support the objectives of their community and as such an expansion of a facility on a site may be supportable, depending on the context.

Connect includes policies to protect and enhance the city's ecological network and to maintain the park system to prevent the degradation of natural areas. These policies focus on improving the park system for ecosystem connectivity, biodiversity, and wildlife and habitat conservation. They also aim to protect natural areas during development, restrict harmful activities, and ensure careful management. This includes prioritizing the conservation and restoration of natural areas while preventing future degradation.

The plan also includes operational actions directing the assessment and update of maintenance costs to preserve the value of natural areas, the preparation of habitat management plans for all natural areas, and the establishment of sustainable funding for park management. Together, the implementation of these actions will ensure that site-specific management guidance is developed for each natural area, and management actions are implemented to maintain or improve natural area park condition

How does *Connect* address the maintenance of Calgary Parks?

"Can we also advocate for the improved maintenance of Lyndsay's Folly, which runs parallel to the Elbow River pathway and has crumbling railway tie stairs and overgrown natural areas?"

"How can CAs support or get involved in the biological integrity of designated "natural spaces"? Will Connect support citizen science and engagement?"

Policies in *Connect* aim to standardize maintenance levels across the park system. Parks are maintained according to an established Customer Level of Service tool, which defines maintenance standards and expectations for various park types and their amenities. By integrating better data and mapping with customer service scores and maintenance costs, we can make more informed, data-driven decisions to enhance park maintenance and operations, where needed. While *Connect* includes policies that grant Enhanced Landscape Maintenance communities greater flexibility in maintaining their parks, The City will remain primarily responsible for the overall maintenance and operation of the park system.

Connect acknowledges the vital role of community association sites in fostering community development; however, it provides limited policy guidance on these sites, as they are typically identified and implemented through a statutory Area Structure Plan. *Connect* includes specific policies only for new community association sites where developers seek to install amenities at the time of initial park development, a practice that has only recently emerged.

How has *Connect* addressed Calgary's Urban Forestry?

"Growing urban forestry is a goal most of us support, but in many of our inner-city neighbourhoods, we're seeing new developments which first remove all of the trees (many of them mature huge species of trees), then cover most of the lot with buildings, cement, garages, etc. and leave no room for future mature trees. Shouldn't this also be part of the Parks Planning?"

"What about the revised 'Cowboys' Park? There is already work going on, trees and grass are being replaced by cement. How does this align with Parks?"

"Do the tree metrics for total city coverage include private + public trees?"

"Trees and parks are of vital importance, one of our greatest areas of concern is the poor or lack of maintenance."

The policies in *Connect*, including urban canopy grown and tree protection, will be used to inform the updates to the Streets Manual and the Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications (DGSS). *Connect* prioritizes tree and natural area protection, with council approval, Parks and Open Spaces can more effectively advocate for increased budget for tree maintenance and protection. Parks and Open Spaces will continue to work with Planning and Development Services and Infrastructure Services during construction and development to advocate for Calgary's urban canopy.

Improvements to Cowboys Park specifically for future festivals and events will require some hardening of spaces along with deep underground utility work and site regrading. Phase 1 construction will include the removal of 50-80 trees required for underground utility upgrades and the regrading of the park. This work will be conducted in compliance with the Tree Protection Bylaw. The City understands how vital trees are to the character and vibrancy of Calgary's neighbourhoods; we are thoroughly considering design aspects and construction decisions to maintain as many trees as possible. Urban Forestry is involved in this project to monitor tree protection and compensation plans. Future improvements to the space will also include replanting trees and other shrubs and greenery wherever possible. More information about Cowboys Park redevelopment can be found at:

<https://engage.calgary.ca/cowboyspark>.

The City aims to expand the urban tree canopy City wide from 8% currently to 16% by 2065. *Connect* supports this goal by providing guidance on planting suitable tree species, protecting soil, prioritizing equitable tree distribution, and promoting micro forests and other tree planting initiatives on City owned land. However, The City continues to work with private landowners and industry to protect and increase the number of private trees on private land. Including examples like [Branching Out](#) tree program, which distributes free trees to Calgary residents.

Connect's scope specifically provides direction for trees on public land, and include policies such as:

- Where existing public trees cannot be protected, compensation must be provided by the party responsible based on a monetary compensation model.
- A Tree Protection Plan for public trees must be submitted and approved by The City, prior to development activity including excavation, storage of construction material or access routes for people and equipment where the activity is proposed within 6 metres of an existing public tree or its drip line (whichever is greater).

How has *Connect* addressed parks amenities?

"What might an 'amenity' include? Sometimes a wide-open green space that allows for soccer, frisbee, spike ball, softball etc is what best meets the community's needs."

*"How do dog parks factor into this plan? Our existing dog parks are worn down into mud pits due to overuse. How does *Connect* address this unmet need?"*

"If it's already falling by the wayside to maintain the amenities in our parks/greenspace, how is adding more going to benefit?"

Connect defines an amenity as a feature, service or program that provides comfort, convenience, or enjoyment and enables users to recreate in a park. Examples of amenities include:

- Recreation amenities: Picnic and BBQ spaces, gathering spaces, cultural spaces, exercise equipment, spray parks, playgrounds, plazas, leisure skating (loops), toboggan hills, and off-leash dog areas.
- Sport amenities: Soccer pitch, cricket fields, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, basketball courts, pump tracks, skate parks, disc golf courses, and ice rinks.
- Environment amenities: Natural areas, naturalized areas, waterbodies, and tree stands.

As a high-level policy plan, *Connect* identifies off-leash dogs areas as a recreation park function, and includes an operational action to develop a strategy to identify locations for new fenced off-leash dog areas. To support this work,

Connect also includes *Natural Area Park Types, Management and Use Guidelines* which provides direction on when off-leash dogs areas are appropriate in natural areas and parks.

Connect does not carry any direct budgetary requirements. However, it includes high-level budget estimates in Chapter 7: Implementing *Connect*, to provide a general sense of the potential scale of investment. These estimates will be refined over time as specific actions are implemented by Administration and brought forward for Calgary City Council's approval.

Council's approval of individual actions and associated budgets is discretionary and not tied to the approval of the *Connect* plan itself. Any new amenities or capital improvements proposed under *Connect* would be presented to Council through separate funding requests.

Does *Connect* tie into the work of the *Parks and Playground Amenities Program (PAPA)*?

As the *Parks and Playground Amenities (PAPA)* Program was already underway, *Connect* has not directly influenced or informed it. However, going forward, *Connect* will help shape programs like PAPA by identifying functionality gaps to be addressed through park redevelopment. *Connect* will also provide overarching policy direction for park design, accessibility, public engagement, and other key considerations that can guide future iterations of PAPA.

How is the Enhanced Landscape Maintenance (ELM) related to *Connect*, and is there an obligation for communities in Calgary to participate?

"Could you please talk about the impact of The City's volunteer program on local community associations? For example, what about ELM and Special Levy? How will this impact park funding? If CAs canvass residents and get approval for ELM, they get better results? This is asking a lot of volunteers in CAs or RAs!"

"The ELM program seems to indicate that if residents are willing to pay more (on their taxes), they will get enhanced maintenance. This is contrary to increased "fairness" and equity. Will there be increased need for CAs to "ante up" to keep their park areas well-maintained?"

Public spaces are sometimes improved by individual volunteers such as those that participate in programs like Adopt-a-Park or business improvement areas (BIA) who beautify commercial areas in communities. *Connect* has no impact on current community volunteer programs.

The Enhanced Landscape Maintenance (ELM) program is a separate, optional, Council-approved program available to community organizations, including community associations and residents/homeowner associations, who wish to have additional landscape maintenance and services in their community's parks and open spaces, beyond what is standardly provided by The City (flower displays, additional mowings cycles, etc.). There is no requirement or expectation that community associations be part of the ELM program. It is an *opt-in* program that simply provides a mechanism to support communities who desire it.

This program has no impact upon the park maintenance budgets typically allocated to each community by Parks & Open Spaces. Any funds applied to delivering enhanced maintenance services are self-generated by the community through a formal process. The services are provided by a contractor and managed through an agreement with The City, which outlines expectations for the work.

Funding for an ELM program is raised either via a Special Tax Levy on each community household (if the support of 66.7% of community households can be gained through a petition), or via residents' or homeowner's association funding (raised via a caveat on the title of all community households.) Further information on the Enhanced Landscape Maintenance program can be found online at: <https://www.calgary.ca/communities/enhanced-landscape-maintenance-petitions.html>

How were Calgarians engaged on *Connect*?

"Could you please hold some open houses directly in each quadrant of The City so that residents have a chance to learn more and ask questions?"

*"Sorry, but your engage as I understood it was gathering information on what Calgarians wanted. It wasn't engagement on what you are proposing in *Connect* was it? Please clarify."*

A comprehensive engagement and separate research program were completed as part of the development of *Connect*, to ensure it responds to the current and future needs of Calgarians. Engagement strategies and implementation plans for *Connect* were developed by IAP2 trained engage professionals in The City's Engage

Resource Unit. These plans outline WHO we will talking to, WHAT we will talk about, WHAT objectives we are trying to achieve, WHEN we will do it, HOW we will do it, and HOW the feedback will be used.

Through this engagement process, *Connect* heard from over 22,000 Calgarians through various engagement methods, over three unique engagement and validation phases from Spring 2023 to Fall 2024. Engagement was one of many inputs into decision making and themes from what we heard both informed decision-making and were incorporated where possible into the *Connect* plan.

Engagement was organized into five streams over the three phases of engagement to ensure a comprehensive approach, offering tailored information and discussions for different groups based on their level of knowledge and interest in the project. Throughout the three public engagement phases, the project's online engagement portal received over 32,400 views, with 19,625 unique visitors and 1,680 contributions. With support of The City's Engage Resource Unit, the project team hosted 19 online workshops, 53 in-person and virtual open houses and pop-up events, consulted with nine advisory committees, and organized a *Connect* event series featuring six public events. These events attracted over 300 attendees and targeted engagement efforts with equity denied Calgarians resulted in an additional 427 completed paper questionnaires. Through the first and second engagement phases, *Connect* reached over 22,000 Calgary park users.

Phase 1 of public engagement sought to understand what Calgarians valued about the park system and what barriers they experience that impact their ability to access and use parks. Feedback from this phase informed engagement for the next phase.

Phase 2 presented overarching actions and broad plan directions to the public and interested parties to confirm whether feedback from Phase 1 was addressed adequately. Feedback from this phase was then used to create the draft plan and policies.

Phase 3 involved sharing the draft plan and a 'What We Did' report. This final phase gave the public an opportunity to provide feedback on any gaps or considerations that should be addressed in the final draft.

Engagement was also conducted with organizations and representatives who expressed specific interest in one or more aspects of the project. To ensure internal alignment and effective policies in *Connect*, meaningful engagement and collaboration was conducted with City of Calgary employees and subject matter experts. Technical advisory groups were also established to provide expertise in developing specific policy areas. Staff engagement included in-person and virtual meetings, virtual workshops, presentations of initial plan goals and directions for feedback, and the circulation of draft policies for review.

A statistically representative research program, including surveys and focus groups, was also carried out to validate public engagement feedback and to better understand certain key concerns, such as safety. This research ensured that the needs of all Calgarians were being addressed and not just those who participated in engagement. The result of this research echoed the themes from what we heard in the engagement.

Once approved, *Connect* will be shared through social media, traditional media, an update to the Calgary.ca webpage, and direct distribution to interested organizations such as the Federation of Calgary Communities.

Communications and advertising of engagement opportunities

"when and where was it advertised? In Bowness? in each community?"
"I wasn't aware of an open house in Varsity. How was it advertised"

An important component of the engagement process is communicating and advertising the opportunities available for people to participate, and therefore a comprehensive communication plan was implemented in phases 1 and 2. Word of mouth through existing networks was promoted through Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators and Park Coordinators. External agencies and organizations were also asked to share engagement opportunities with the people they serve. Printed and digital posters advertising the *Connect* event series in phase one were widely circulated.

Traditional communication tactics and digital coverage included:

1. Ward Office communications toolkit
2. Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator Board Reports to Community Associations in April and November 2023
3. Sounding boards in parks around Calgary (10 park locations in Phase 1, 8 park locations in Phase 2)
4. Over 1500 promotional postcards distributed
5. Curbex and Bold signs installed in all quadrants of Calgary, including downtown.
6. Television 15-second spots on both CTV and OMNI.
7. Radio spots on RED FM – Punjabi/Hindi and Fairchild in Mandarin/Cantonese
8. Premium banner ads and “In-language” banner ads in Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Punjabi
9. YouTube ads

How was the Federation of Calgary Communities and Community Associations engaged?

As part of our engagement (listed above) the Federation of Calgary Communities was included in the invitations to *Connect*'s online workshops. The Federation of Calgary Communities was sent emails for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of *Connect*'s online engagement workshops (April 14, 2023, and October 10, 2023, respectively). City of Calgary's Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators included *Connect*'s engagement opportunities in their Board Reports to community associations in April and November 2023, and posters were shared with community associations. During the first phase of engagement, in-person events were equally distributed across each ward. In the second phase, in-person events were held across the four city quadrants. For all phases of engagement, Ward offices received a communication toolkit to share engagement opportunities with Community Associations, businesses, and constituents.

How much will *Connect* cost?

Connect itself does not have any budgetary requirements. However, it provides high level budget estimates, included in Chapter 7: Implementing *Connect*, to help understand the approximate scale of investment. These estimates will be refined as actions are implemented by Administration, with Calgary City Council's approval over the plan's lifetime. Council's approval of specific actions and budgets remains discretionary and is not tied to the approval of this plan.

City-related costs will primarily be reflected in operational expenses and capital investments for park development and renewal. In some cases, initial capital costs may be offset by long-term operational savings. Developer-related costs in new communities may also change but will vary by community. Importantly, The City's 10% municipal reserve and/or municipal school reserve dedication remains unchanged, with *Connect* focusing on re-prioritizing how the park system is planned and developed.

The plan does not assign any expectations, responsibilities, or costs to community associations. *Connect* also does not speak to any changes in the role or mandate of community associations. Changes to community associations' funding or other supports from The City are outside the scope of this plan. In cases where additional funding is allocated to parks in the future, *Connect* will assist in identifying areas of need within the park system.

What are the implications if *Connect* is not passed?

"If council votes this down, will you be able to do another presentation to our new council in the fall?"

"So really, there is no protection for parks in this document either-- if it is an existing park, it is already being used in some fashion (hence not unusable), or if Council decides there is a higher priority for the land?"

Currently, Calgary's park system policies prioritize smaller, single-use parks with limited connectivity will continue to be developed in new communities. This approach results in a fragmented park system with fewer opportunities for recreation, inclusivity, and accessibility. In established communities, capital investment such as park enhancements, amenity replacement and lifecycle maintenance will continue as existing budgets permit. Additionally, a reduced focus on conservation and naturalization could lead to greater risks to the urban canopy and a decline in ecological resilience.

If Calgary City Council votes against *Connect*, the ability to provide diverse recreational opportunities that reflect the needs of Calgarians of all ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds may be limited. A less integrated park system can

also slow progress in improving access and inclusiveness, preventing residents from fully benefiting from public green spaces.

Maintaining numerous small, underutilized parks is both costly and inefficient, potentially leading to lower maintenance standards across the system. Without a shift toward a more strategic approach grounded in data-driven decision-making operational inefficiencies will persist, and communities may lack access to high-quality, well-maintained park spaces that support health, vibrancy, and resilience.

Once approved, how will Connect be carried out?

"How is The City sharing this "plan" with all the residents of The City of Calgary so that everyone will be aware? is there a mailout going to every household?"

Next steps will be guided by *Connect's* 'Implementation' section (Chapter 7), where clear priorities have been identified. Some actions will be implemented by re-prioritizing existing Parks resources and funding; others will require additional support from Council. These will be brought forward for consideration during annual budget discussions. The cost estimates for implementation will be refined over time as specific actions are undertaken and approved by Council.

Following *Connect's* approval, work will begin on a more detailed implementation plan. This plan will outline costs, timelines, responsibilities, and key partners for operational actions. Parks & Open Spaces will collaborate with Infrastructure Services to update the Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications for Landscape Construction, ensuring they reflect *Connect's* policies and inform future development. *Connect's* policies and actions will directly inform the next four-year budget cycle, helping to guide investment and prioritization.