WAREHOUSE PARK
EDMONTON, ALBERTA
PRELIMINARY DESIGN REPORT
OCTOBER 2023
Warehouse Park is located near some of Edmonton’s most iconic features such as the Alberta Legislature, the expansive North Saskatchewan River Valley, MacEwen University, and the evolving skyline just to the east. For the immediate context however, composed mostly of parking lots that used to be car dealerships, there is a tabula rasa condition that motivated the design team to zoom-out and consider the specificity of the region, and in particular, the Parkland biome in which Edmonton is located.

The concept is based on the notion of a place where two landscapes meet, in this case the Prairie and the Boreal Forest. It is this threshold between two distinct landscapes that underlies the concept for the park, to capture the experience of the Parkland transitional biome in the heart of the city.

The interplay between these two landscapes is expressed by a clearing on the east side of the park (a prairie-like expansive space that allows for big-sky program and views to the city), and a forested space to the west (where rooms are carved out of a continuous tree canopy that provide more intimate spaces for gathering and recreating). A warming plaza on the west side takes its cue from the experience of gathering around campfires under conifer boughs. The prairie experience on the east side is captured through an open clearing framed by a ‘northern light’ structure that emulates the aurora borealis phenomenon. A place to see and be seen, the scale and proportion of this clearing will allow visitors to feel safe and comfortable, with long views to see others and share in the collective mood of the park.
The interweave of paths crossing these two landscapes merges at the 107 Street axis, the north-south meandering spine that serves as a key threshold into the park. This axis frames sight lines beyond the park, such as to the landmark spires of MacEwen University to the north.

The park concept informs a language and character for other features, such as the playground as well as the park’s large timber furniture. Gently undulating topography also embodies the overlapping horizons emblematic of the central Alberta landscape. This conceptual starting point ensures that design features are universal instead of generic, rooted in a framework that embellishes an experience of phenomena that is meaningful to everyone, while being specific to each individual at the same time.

Two schemes were created early in the schematic design process, the first taking reference from Edmonton’s iconic Elm allées that frame the streets in the city’s mature neighbourhoods. These vaulted street tree canopies define a local cultural landscape precedent that was considered for a more formal expression of the park. A more organic approach was also explored in parallel, which was later preferred through stakeholder and public consultation. This approach aligns with the explanation of the ward name, ‘O’Day-min’, the Anishinaabe word for strawberry (or heart-berry), and the spirit of this name inspired a more organic spatial arrangement. This functioning looseness of parts, from pathways and trees, structures and program areas, as well as spaces left aside for stormwater and fauna, will create a place that is open-ended in its expression and circulation, flexible in use, and resilient as the park evolves over time.
Details and language extend beyond the park's limits to inform the design of the peripheral laneways, the street stubs reaching out to the Jasper and 102 Avenues to the south and north, as well as 106th Street on the east side of the park. While 106th Street will become a complete street, the other circulation routes will reinforce a safe pedestrian priority that can also accommodate local vehicles.

New Perspectives

The City's desire for a design team with a diverse background and experience in park design reflects an intention to bring new perspectives to this site. Taking cues from the local landscape and the evolution of the district, an innovative approach to space making provides opportunities to create legacy city-building features that can someday become new signatures to distinguish tomorrow's neighbourhood.
The design for this park considers how it will need to perform in a changing context and climate. Stormwater capture and reuse on site is a key principle behind the park’s layout and grading, using old-fashioned landscape principles to deal with future challenges. The park’s vegetation palette, partially inspired by local flora, also considers adding species from beyond the current regional landscape to create an urban forest sufficiently diverse and resilient to handle new temperature, rain and snowfall realities to come.

A Meeting Place for the Community
As the neighbourhood intensifies, so does the need for a space for the community to come together and meet up, socialize, and play. The park is designed for flexibility, to allow for various types of uses, many of which are still to come as community needs evolve. It also includes dedicated features to anchor program, such as a toboggan hill, swings on the northern light structure, program pockets for activities like table tennis and outdoor fitness, picnic areas, and a pick-up basketball court which can double as a snowbank rink in winter. These elements are laid out to promote a park for a wide range of activity and users that uphold a coherent experience of a green oasis in the heart of the city.
BUFFALO CHECK
- RUSTIC, COZY, WARM

PICNIC BLANKET
- SUMMERY, PASTORAL, FRESH

TWO PLAZAS
WITH UNIQUE PAVING PATTERNS
Back of Park Pavilion (West Laneway)
PUBLIC ART INTEGRATION
ARTIST: SANAZ MAZINANI
PICKUP BASKETBALL COURT
3 HOOPS IN FLEXIBLE SPACE

PROGRAMMING POTENTIAL
SEACAN STAGE AND CROWD SIZE
# OF DECIDUOUS TREES: 84
# OF CONIFEROUS TREES: 46

TOTAL: 130
70 TREES / HA

Landscape Layout - Trees
Street + Frame Trees

Silver Maple: Acer saccharinum
Hackberry: Celtis occidentalis
Bur Oak: Quercus macrocarpa
Red Oak: Quercus rubra
American Linden: Tilia americana

True North Linden: Tilia americana 'Duros'
American Elm: Ulmus americana
Brandon Elm: Ulmus americana 'Brandon'
Patmore Elm: Ulmus americana 'Patmore'
Red Maple *Acer rubrum*

Silver Maple *Acer saccharinum*

Autumn Blaze Maple *Acer freemanii 'Jeffersred'*

Paper Birch *Betula papyrifera*

Northern Acclaim
Gleditsia triacanthos 'Harve'

Black Walnut *Juglans nigra*
Larch *Larix laricina*

Norway Spruce *Picea abies*

Black Spruce *Picea mariana*

Lodgepole Pine *Pinus contorta var. latifolia*

Eastern White Pine *Pinus strobus*

Douglas fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*

Makamic Crabapple *Malus ‘Makamic’*
Species that are native to a regional ecosystem are not always appropriate for urban contexts. Planting in urban conditions requires a balance of durability, drought-tolerance, inundation-tolerance, salt-tolerance and a proven success in local hardiness zones. Species proposed for Warehouse Park have been selected to create this balance while integrating seasonal value and maintenance considerations from the City of Edmonton Parks Operations department.

**General Principles:**

- **± 90% species native to Canada**
- **± 70% species native to Alberta**

Plants and trees chosen to represent 2 natural regions: Parkland (70%) and Prairie (30%)

Safety considerations: nothing too dense or high

Plants that have benefits beyond aesthetics

**Understory Planting Strategy**
SCHEMATIC LIGHTING DESIGN

Pedestrian lighting with light distribution (shared way with sidewalks)

Street lighting

Pedestrian lighting (inside the park)

Architectural lighting

Fountain highlight

The ‘Northern Light’
Covering 1.81 hectares, this park has the working name of Warehouse Park due to its location in Edmonton’s Warehouse District. The formal naming of the park is not included in the project scope and will follow the process of the Edmonton Naming Committee. Its area is greater than two football fields and is located between 106 Street and 108 Street and Jasper Avenue to 102 Avenue. The scope of the park design includes the redesign of 106 Street from Jasper Avenue to 102 Avenue and the closure of 107 Street, which will further the transformation of the area into a continuous green oasis, turning parking lots into paradise.

Warehouse Park will be an inclusive, multi-use green space featuring large, open areas that invite citizens and visitors to reflect and explore. This park will serve as a major public amenity for downtown residents, workers and visitors as the downtown population is expected to significantly increase in the next decade.

In alignment with BREATHE, Warehouse Park has been designed to be a key contributor to the network of open spaces in Edmonton’s downtown. By creating a space that embraces citizens, plants, wildlife, as well as infrastructure, the park can ultimately meet the needs of the growing city and community on numerous fronts. The mandate is to create a ‘green’ park with a neighbourhood focus and an emphasis on wellness and ecology.

In the context of Edmonton and Alberta, Warehouse Park’s design has a unique identity that specifically draws on the context of Edmonton and Alberta in terms of park elements, site furnishings, natural ecology and overall character.

The design to this point is the result of 18 months of active design team work that included two phases of extensive public and stakeholder engagement and regular design meetings with the City of Edmonton. The Preliminary Design builds on the Concept Design following design goals, design requirements, city policies and plans. The design team brought forward options and strategies based on technical expertise that have been refined into the current preliminary design plan. Coincident to the park design development were pavilion design and transportation studies that have culminated in the attached Pavilion Schematic Design Report and the Right of Way Preliminary Design Report. These coordinated plans and proposals embody site and regional sensitivity, Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), community attention and technical feasibility - all in an effort to create a magical and unique experience for Edmontonians for years to come.
PROJECT DECISIONS
When making decisions, there are three considerations: City policies and programs, technical requirements and public input. These inputs have been used to validate the design to ensure that the park will fit the needs of the downtown community, future park users and the City of Edmonton.

INTEGRATING REQUIRED ELEMENTS
(feature different scales of spaces in all seasons. Conifers and deciduous trees selected for their form and character will provide seasonal interest, shade and habitat value. The park has been designed to accommodate programming for all seasons, and festivals and events can be held throughout the year in various locations. Activities, gatherings and ceremonies can be accommodated in accordance with Edmonton’s Winter City Design Guidelines. Specific Winter City elements include the sledding hill, multi-use sports court designed to accommodate a snow-bank rink, ski places, and lighting that accentuates the fountain in the “Warming Zone” and the “Northern Lights” in the Clearing year-round.

INTEGRATED STREETSCAPES
Both 106 Street and the 107 Street Promenades are integral parts of the park. 106 Street is a critical threshold to the project from the east. The tree planting and crosswalk locations are proposed as adjusted to better integrate with the park language. A triple alley of trees will distinguish the 106 Street streetscape adjacent to the park as pedestrians, cyclists and drivers move north and south. The park design incorporates the 106 Street streetscape as an important entry and gateway into the site. It takes the design of the street and makes it feel integral to the park layout. Additionally, laneways are sized to accommodate a shared space for services and pedestrian life. Where existing developments have back of house conditions facing the park, planting is proposed as a screen or buffer.

107 Street is transformed into an integrated pedestrian promenade as part of the overall park language while still accommodating utilities, clearance requirements and emergency servicing. While the path meanders as part of the overall park language, it is still wide enough to accommodate food trucks or event structures and provides a clear view north to MacEwan University.

ACTIVATED LANEWAYS
Designed as a framework for the park, the laneways will facilitate future development plans and their continued needs for service zones. Activation of the laneways is proposed with programmed activity pods and a distinct paving design using unit pavers.

PUBLIC ART
In collaboration with Edmonton Arts Council and Canadian artist Sanaz Mazinani, Warehouse Park has incorporated the current design for an accessible public art installation. The interactive art is supported and integrated in the park to enhance visitor experience. Public engagement for the art is independent of the park project, but the design team is working with the artist to ensure a holistic approach.
Design Excellence has been at the forefront of the Warehouse Park development since the earliest ideas about the project. Early engagement work by the City established the Design Goals and Vision and the subsequent Request for Proposal for the Warehouse Park Project and set out the framework for the design process currently underway.

City policies and procedures, technical requirements brought forward by the design team, and feedback from the public and stakeholders has informed the design methodology and process for the park’s development. The Concept Design formed the basis for the Preliminary Design phase that will now be detailed for park construction.

Since the acceptance of the Concept Design Report, the Design Team has completed a second round of Public Engagement and has continued to develop the park design, to the Preliminary Design level in accordance with public engagement results, City input and technical reviews. This includes planting, material and lighting strategies, material specifications, and features such as the “Northern Light,” the “Camp Fountain” and the warming stations. Additionally, the Washroom Pavilion has been developed to the Schematic Design level.

2020

The vision and parameters were used to develop the park design, moving out of the Strategy phase into the Concept phase. These design goals reflect the prominence of the site, and the park’s potential to revitalize downtown Edmonton. The City acquired two new parcels of land, and due to COVID-19, the design competition originally proposed to secure a consultant was canceled, kickstarting the alternative procurement process for design services.

2021

Additional land parcels were procured, and the Warehouse Park project was awarded to gh3* as lead firm and the architecture lead, Claude Cormier + Associés as the landscape architecture lead, AECOM as the engineering team, and Twenty/20 Communications as the public engagement team.

MAY 2022

The first round of design engagement commenced and completed, resulting in an impressive reservoir of public and stakeholder feedback.

FALL 2022

The Concept Design phase was completed and the report was approved by the City of Edmonton. The Preliminary Design phase began with the second round of public engagement.

SPRING 2023

The Preliminary Design phase is complete and the report is submitted for City of Edmonton review. The Detailed Design phase will commence upon approval of the Preliminary Design Phase, including the Pavilion Schematic Design and Transportation Report.
The aggregation of existing surface parking, alleyways, and 106 Street will enable 1.81 hectares of predominately paved area in the heart of downtown Edmonton to be transformed into a green haven. Ensuring and enhancing integrated multi-modal connectivity throughout the Warehouse Campus District will not only increase access, but remind residents and visitors of Warehouse Park’s status as a critical green link.

Converting a parking lot into a park makes a notable statement about the value Edmontonians place on the environment and public space. De-asphalting the entire park area is the first step in the construction of Warehouse Park, stripping off the crust of hard surfaces to make way for a large interconnected soil environment underground. Prioritizing vegetated surfaces will allow air and rainwater to permeate into the soils below, promoting a social life of roots that underlies a robust park of trees.

This first step will be a commitment to a park that is a civic green. The design optimizes soil quality and volume to encourage a large and healthy tree canopy, as well as to create a ‘sponge’ for water infiltration, retention, and reuse by the park’s vegetated layer. Low Impact Design will be achieved through low-tech timeless landscape principles, emphasizing a minimum of hard paving to reduce heat island effect and help minimize the park’s carbon footprint.

EDMONTON IS A WINTER CITY. Warehouse Park will celebrate the winter months and the darker evenings with a lighting strategy that is uniquely Edmontonian and Albertan. The experience of Warehouse Park will be dynamic and engaging at all hours of the day and through all seasons. This will be a park that embraces and invites visitors at all times of the year. The park is designed to be accessible, safe, active and enjoyable year-round, while also celebrating the unique character of Edmonton’s seasons.

RESILIENCE FORMS A CRITICAL ASPECT OF WAREHOUSE PARK’S CHARACTER. The Park design includes sustainability initiatives and low-impact development features. Resilience forms the overarching design framework that in its simplicity, minimalism and attention to detail will withstand the test of time. Warehouse Park will become an important chapter in the history of Edmonton’s downtown.

WAREHOUSE PARK WILL BE A GATHERING PLACE AND A CONVERGENCE POINT FOR THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY. It also becomes a new front yard for businesses and activities at its perimeter. The park will be an essential component of Edmonton’s green network, connecting to other area parks.

In accordance with Section 910 of the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw, there are several Downtown Special Area Zoning Regulations that must be considered in the design and planning of Warehouse Park. The objectives of these regulations is to deem the downtown a Special Area and ultimately achieve the aim of the Capital City Downtown Plan, which seeks to transform Edmonton to a more urban centre, increase livability, and create one of the most special places on the planet.

Warehouse Park was originally located in the Urban Warehouse Zone (UW) however a successful rezoning application was submitted in this phase to rezone Warehouse Park to the zone Public Parks (AP). The built environment aspires to be human-scaled, safe and walkable, elaborating on the existing land-use pattern and relevant to the functions of the area.

For both permitted and discretionary uses, the following urban design regulation applies:

PUBLIC AMENITY SPACES

Residential open spaces, parks, plazas furnishings and locations of art, seating areas and other amenities at grade shall be complementary to the adjacent streetscape and be visually and physically accessible to the public.
The design team will continue to work with the City of Edmonton on the continued application of all policies listed in future phases as well as all regulatory processes still to be addressed such as:
- Submitted in the Concept Design Phase:
  - Rezoning / Road Closure and Consolidation
- Submitted in the Preliminary Design Phase:
  - Development Permit Application
  - Edmonton Design Committee Formal Review Package
  - Historical Resource Act Clearance
To be completed during the Detailed Design Phase:
- Building Permit
- Sediment Control Plan
- Tree Protection and Preservation Plan
- WASS submission
Construction phasing will also be discussed and coordinated with the City of Edmonton prior to construction. A high-level strategy has been included in section 3.4

The Design Team has consulted City of Edmonton Policies and Technical Guidelines in order to appropriately incorporate all Design Elements in the Preliminary Design Plan based on the Park Vision and Design Goals as developed by the City of Edmonton and confirmed through two phases of Public Engagement, and verified through technical consultation and investigation.

The visionary nature of the Warehouse Park design supports the increased density and vibrancy afforded by urban places. The park ultimately contributes to Edmonton’s enhanced open space network whereby wellness, ecology, and celebration govern the design as expressed in the city’s Open Space Policy.

The Final Preliminary Design demonstrates that Warehouse Park is a community level space with wellness as its highest priority, as supported by amenities sponsoring gathering, relaxation, and exploration.

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SAFETY AND CPTED PRINCIPLES

SIGHTLINES
The terrain of Warehouse Park is composed of open green space and soft slopes, sized to maintain clear and safe sightlines. A regular maintenance schedule that involves trimming trees and shrubs to appropriate heights will maximize clear views under tree canopies. Additionally, the washroom facility on the western edge is designed so that it’s form and materiality will provide additional views into the park from the west.

SPECIES SELECTION
The selection of tree species is closely correlated to crime prevention. Warehouse Park will be a mix of coniferous and deciduous trees, ensuring that the placement of coniferous material will not engender security concerns. Evergreen trees will be used at higher elevations where views beneath are enabled and limbed up where this position is not possible.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY
Community-oriented space serves as a deterrent for crime. In Warehouse Park, major hubs for community or gathering areas are located to coincide with the best natural sightlines. For instance, the central layout of the building - integrated in the west plaza - maintains the visibility of both the central clearing and the washroom facility from one axis. In this way, the design of the park avoids hidden spaces and potential dead zones.

LIGHTING
Dark Sky outdoor lighting throughout the park, as well as ample street and tree lighting, will ensure visibility in and around Warehouse Park year-round. Lighting from the washroom facility will also discourage graffiti and vandalism.

THANK YOU
THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE WAREHOUSE PARK PROJECT. THE PROJECT WILL ADVANCE TO THE DETAILED DESIGN PHASE. DESIGN ELEMENTS SHOWN IN THE PRELIMINARY DESIGN MAY BE ADJUSTED OR REMOVED BASED ON FACTORS SUCH AS TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OR COST CONSIDERATIONS.