

CENTURY GARDENS:

The existing park at Century Gardens, created as part of Calgary's 1975 Centennial celebration, is an important cultural landscape. The brutalist-influenced angular concrete forms and cascading waterfalls recount the beauty of the Alberta landscape and create realistic and abstract expressions of nature, including nature as a form-generating influence. The result is a landscape within Calgary's dense urban center that offers users a temporary reprieve and establishes a place of sanctuary for exploration and celebration.

40 years later, the park has suffered the fate of other similar developments in the perception, and fact, of a lack of safety for the public. Intimate, natural spaces, and secluded waterfalls became interpreted as isolated and therefore dangerous. The resultant lack of use by the public exacerbated the problem and by extension made the park even less safe, and less used.

This project design arises from a commission mandate by the City of Calgary to reinvigorate the park through the provision of a new set of community amenities, thereby making the park well-used and safer, while strategically connecting with the existing cultural landscape and breathing new life into the unique features as an investment into Calgary's collective memory.

In response, the project manifests four integrated design strategies: (1) establish connective pathways that link critical destinations and suture changes in grade in an accessible manner, (2) layer public programming and amenities to animate the outdoor spaces, (3) weave spaces and access around the retained elements of the cultural landscape to ensure their presence is fully enjoyed in a safe manner, and (4) establish two architectural bookends to the main cultural landscape pools in order to provide necessary public services to the park and create a strong sectional quality around the pools so that the public can fully access this sculptural feature.

The center of the park is occupied by two complimentary oblong shapes that contain highly participatory spaces including an informal social stair/amphitheater and splash pool/reflecting pool. Both spaces offer a spectrum of seating opportunities and spaces of pause, while at the same time assume a highly celebratory aspect when the spaces are programmed or fully occupied.

The refurbished existing pools figure prominently in the two major entries to the park, one at the LRT station and the other at the intersection of 8th Avenue and 8th Street. Together, these entries establish the legibility of this park design as being both contemporary and grounded in the history of Calgary. In particular, these pools and their inherent sculptural dimensions are best appreciated in their three dimensionality which is afforded at both entries given their grade changes and multi-story nature.

Both landscape and architectural form share a complimentary palette of materials reflecting the cultural landscape's material culture of concrete, wood, water, and light. In this manner, new and existing, the historic and the contemporary, speak as an orchestrated whole, reconnecting Calgarians with a well-

recognized iconographic landscape while offering new ways to enjoy the associated spaces and places of the park and its urban amenities.