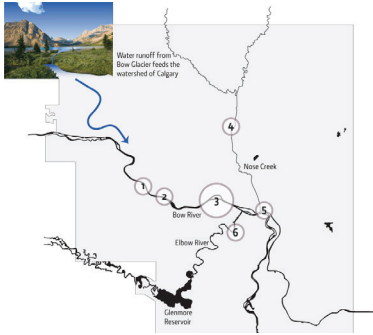




Image number:



The City of Calgary

TITLE	<i>A Public Art Plan for Utility Infrastructure</i>
LOCATION	The City of Calgary
DESCRIPTION	<p>Context What is a Watershed? It is “that area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of the community.” John Wesley Powell, explorer of the Colorado River, 1869</p> <p>Landscape and Infrastructure Though many North American cities grew, as Calgary did, because of their geographic relationship to a river, few of these cities enjoy a connection with a river whose ecosystem is as intact as the Bow River. A source of drinking water, recreation, and a world-class trout fishery, the Bow has long been the lifeblood of Calgary. Tucked into the foothills that roll out from the Rockies, the Bow River is a quiet, steady force in the landscape.</p> <p>The Bow River and its watershed are resources cared for by many Canadian agencies. The City works closely with regional partners to address water quality, conservation, management, and watershed protection. The word “Protection” says a great deal about the intention and attitude of the Utilities and Environmental Protection Department (UEP) and its goals. Mindful management of the riparian zones of the Bow and Elbow Rivers has left Calgary with an urban watershed whose main arm possesses many characteristics of a river within a much more rural setting. The cumulative effect of Calgary’s continually improving environmental stewardship of the Bow and Elbow Rivers also contributes to the health of the watershed in general.</p> <p>In Calgary, the idea of infrastructure has been tempered by our understanding of stewardship, efficiency, and cost-effective management. We do not normally think of infrastructure as beautiful; yet there is untapped potential in its forms to reveal and express how and why the city has grown. Pump stations, reservoirs, treatment plants, run off catchments, culverts and grates — all of these are charted in relationship to the natural watershed of the Bow River and to Calgary’s social and economic needs. The positions of these natural and urban forces in the landscape are inextricably bound into a web of engineering, social desire, and the geology and hydrology of the watershed(s).</p> <p>The UEP Public Art Plan anticipates that the forms and processes of Calgary’s water management infrastructure could be used for aesthetic expression and education in the coming decades. Calgary has a unique urban position as the steward of a great Canadian River in an even greater Canadian landscape between the Bow Glacier, the city, and the larger downstream Canadian watershed. Developing an interesting and informative aesthetic expression for UEP and water infrastructure will send a message to the rest of North America and beyond that art can bring a greater civic awareness to infrastructure and water resources. Just as the communities and municipalities downriver benefit from Calgary’s stewardship of the Bow River, the rest of Canada and the US can learn another way to connect to infrastructure and stewardship — through public art.</p>

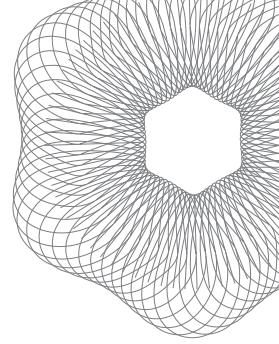


Image number:



TITLE	<i>A Public Art Plan for Utility Infrastructure</i>
DESCRIPTION CONT.	<p>Place-Making and the Watershed Framework</p> <p>Art installed as a singular event has always had and will continue to have its place in the city. However, the notion of art as a series of linked events — events that unfold and reveal the character of a place — is more suited to a public art plan for a City department whose influence ranges over the entire city and its infrastructure.</p> <p>UEP oversees delivery systems for both fresh water and water effluents within Calgary’s city limits. The context for this engineered and expansive system is the Bow River watershed, which is the “natural” system for delivery and discharge. By selecting the watershed as a model for thinking about the city, we immediately connect Calgary to the places beyond its boundaries. We make a statement about its geographic connectedness to the Bow Glacier at the headwaters of the Bow River and to other watersheds in Alberta and beyond to Hudson’s Bay. UEP’s infrastructure responds to the watershed and all its functions by controlling Calgary’s interactions with the landscape. The UEP Public Art Plan encompasses Calgary’s watershed as well as the UEP infrastructure knitted into it. From the encompassing “Visual Language” project to the more place-specific Harvie Passage and Shepard Wetlands projects, the watershed connects our thinking to Calgary itself and provides inspiration for the artists who will activate the plan.</p> <p>UEP public art projects will focus on the expressive potential of infrastructure. They will create distinctive places throughout the community, building public awareness of The City’s commitment to the safety and long-term sustainability of our water supply.</p> <p>The Role of the Artist and of Public Art: Interdisciplinary Actions within the Watershed</p> <p>The outstanding qualities of the projects outlined in this Plan will encourage public interest, involvement, and education surrounding Calgary’s public utilities and the environmental services managed by UEP. Interdisciplinary artist-led teams will work collaboratively to create an aesthetic for our infrastructure that encourages sustainability and stewardship of the environment. The plan will help to create new places along the river, places where art challenges us to think differently about Calgary and about the impact of our actions, both individually and collectively. The artist’s role in this endeavor is one of a civic and environmentally-minded provocateur. Through projects, both conceptual and built, artists’ work will offer Calgarians a different window into their own rapidly changing urban landscape. And, like the Bow River, UEP public art will become an integral part of Calgary’s civic life.</p>
DATE	2005 - ON-GOING
CLIENT/REFERENCE	Arts and Science Council, Charlotte NC