

## A BRILLIANT WORK IN PROGRESS

# EAST VILLAGE

BY ANDREA COX

The sun shines brilliantly and a soft dusting of snow has turned the inner-city sanctuary of St. Patrick's Island into a winter wonderland. Couples stroll along the pathways, stopping to sun themselves on the sculpted teak benches in Confluence Plaza; it's a place to people watch and relax. Front and centre a sheet of synthetic ice draws flocks of children and adults excited to try their hand at throwing and sweeping a granite curling rock. Just steps away, across the George C. King bridge, the East Village bustles with life, amidst a backdrop of natural beauty, anchored by the Bow River and an exciting urban landscape.

Free outdoor curling is just one activity offered as part of the public programming initiative and place-making vision spearheaded by Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), the developer behind the East Village, a 49-acre, ambitious reclamation project on Calgary's east side of downtown.

"It's our mandate to institute meaningful programming, programming that creates

community," says Jessa Morrison, senior manager marketing and communications at Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC)

The East Village is bordered by the Bow River on the north, Macleod Trail on the west, 9th Avenue on the south and Fort Calgary on the east side and the once run down, weathered and neglected area is now humming with a vibrant beat.

Come spring, the Crossroads community garden, located at the corner of 6th Avenue and 6th Street will be in full swing, connecting people of all ages and acting as a hub of action. Comprised of 88 plots leased out to residents, an apple orchard and interactive playground, the garden is in its second year of operation. "It's really fantastic," says Morrison. "We had apples on the trees in the first year. The garden is a place where connections are being made between young and old, and new residents and those who have lived here for decades." >>



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Imagined as a mixed-use, amenity-rich master-planned neighbourhood, the East Village will be home to more than 11,000 residents upon completion in 2027.

"We are a 20 year project — 2017 marks our halfway point," says Morrison.

But, already the stage is set. The community is becoming a destination. It's becoming a hip place to wine, dine and just hang out.

Take for example the RiverWalk, a two kilometre stretch of walkway and gathering places along the Bow River, where the latest public art installation, Window to the Wild, by local artist Curtis Van Charles Sorensen, was recently unveiled. The installation weaves a series of nine mixed media images of local wildlife, draping three bridge abutments and flyovers, one maintenance-building site and two public washrooms. It's part of CMLC's Art in the Public Realm initiative, a cornerstone of the redevelopment and revitalization of this historic neighbourhood.



St. Patrick's Island

"People have been super excited and very Instagram happy with this installation. They love the local artists," says Morrison.

In addition to the RiverWalk installation, public art peppers the entire development. The landmark sculpture of two storage boxes recently won a design award and this summer, the artist commissioned for the \$2 million public art installation at the New Central Library, will be announced. Morrison hints that "Calgarians will be very excited at how the concept plays off of what a library means, what a library means to a community and the people who visit a library."

A design collaboration between the Calgary firm DIALOG and the Norwegian firm Snøhetta, the new Central Library with its organically inspired contours and breathtaking glass facade will enrich the environment in so many ways, creating a community anchor, and a gateway between the downtown core and the East Village — a key element in knitting together the old and the new. It will be surrounded by a pedestrian-friendly plaza, encouraging interaction, making 3rd Street a destination. The exterior is almost complete. "The real living breathing aspect of what makes a library is what starts to get built in 2017," says Morrison. She invites people to follow along on the project's website [www.yycnewcentrallibrary.com](http://www.yycnewcentrallibrary.com). The webcam is updated every 10 minutes at the construction site. The library is still on course, slated to open in late 2018.

Certainly architectural panache is at the very core of the East Village's community design. Here, glass-sheathed residential towers grace the skyline, while the newly rejuvenated Simmons Building, a century old brick-clad mattress factory buzzes with action, smells of delicious bready things and roasting coffee waft through the air. It's now home to Phil & Sebastian, CharBar and Sidewalk Citizen Café and Bakery.

A new 14-storey, 320-room Hilton Hotel opened its doors in December. And the ultra-modern, Alt Hotel by Germain will offer eco-friendly features and rates to suit the shrewdest of wallets, when it opens in 2017.



Several new residential and commercial projects are almost ready to burst through their cocoons of inspiration. Verve, a 25-storey condominium tower, with five floor podium offering live/work homes from Toronto developer FRAM+Slokker recently broke ground and Embassy Bosa's Evolution with its garden roof deck and selection of fitness rooms is nearing completion. Residents will be taking occupancy of their homes in N3 Knightbridge's parkade-free condominium tower offering in the spring. INK by Battistella Developments has also begun construction and move-in ready by 2018.

An upscale 28-storey family-friendly (there will be three-bedroom designs) rental project, The Hat, by Cidex Developments Ltd. is in the works, as is 5th and Third, a block long development with a Loblaws City Market in the podium and Arris, two residential condominium towers extending skyward. It's a joint development between Embassy Bosa and RioCan Investment Trust. XYZ Developments is charging forward on a mixed-use commercial building adjacent to the Simmons



Building. And Morrison hints that several more projects are in the development stage, soon to be announced. Studio Bell

Retail offerings contribute to the vibe of a community, grounding it. "I think it never really feels like a neighbourhood until you have local shop owners animating the street fronts," says Morrison. To that end, CMLC is considering a pop up retail park, opening May long weekend and running until Labour Day. "We want it to be a destination with live music and food and local businesses or other entrepreneurs or artists who have a great product."

Perhaps the most exciting happening in the East Village is the unveiling of the architecturally stunning National Music Centre (Studio Bell) — it's a design by the Portland, Oregon firm Allied Works Architecture, and spans 160,000 square feet with five floors of exhibition space. It features a collection of rare instruments, artifacts, sound equipment and Canadian music memorabilia that tells the story of music in Canada. The exhibits are interactive and encourage people to explore and engage. The facility features a 300-seat performance centre and several smaller theatre rooms. CKUA now operates from the base of Studio Bell and the artist-in-residency program kicks into place this year. "It's a feather in the hat of our community and the cultural centre that brings life and vibrancy to our community. We will really start to see the layers come into play this year — the talent, the thinking and the discussion around music," says Morrison. CL

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RiverWalk



New Central Library construction

