

6 Enhancement Guidelines

The following guidelines are provided to direct future detailed designs, development, use, programming, and maintenance of the Dartmouth Common.

6.1 Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines

The intent of the urban design guidelines is to ensure that high design standards are maintained in building extensions on lands governed under the *Dartmouth Common Act* and in developments adjacent to those lands which are located within the traditional boundary of the original land grant. Furthermore, these guidelines are intended to aid developers, designers and planners in making architectural decisions for projects on the Dartmouth Common.

The landscape design guidelines are intended to create public realm environments that are functional, purposeful, safe, and aesthetically pleasing and that contribute to the design continuity of the overall area of the Dartmouth Common. By and large, the intent is to protect and enhance the Dartmouth Common's authentic sense of place.

6.1.1 Landscape Character

Wilderness Area

- ↗ Manage current tree population, including significant trees, to ensure their health and long life;
- ↗ Create sightlines across the wilderness area by removing large shrubs and low branching small trees;
- ↗ Establish mature tree stands over time;
- ↗ Establish legible and safe pathways connecting school, bus terminal and major circulation routes; and
- ↗ Consider lighting strategic pathways.

Leighton Dillman Park

- ↗ Conserve existing landscape characteristics;

- ↗ Retain and replant specimen trees, where appropriate, following the original planting plan of the park;
- ↗ Extend fence to include park section at Wyse Road and Windmill Road intersection;
- ↗ Improve entry gateway at Dillman Park parking lot with accentuated planting;
- ↗ Remove low hanging branches where they obstruct important views, particularly of the harbour; and
- ↗ Plan screen planting to protect seating areas exposed to wind.

New Passive Recreational Open Spaces

- ↗ Create comfortable seating areas and install new seats, bins and drinking fountains where people gather;
- ↗ Keep sightlines towards the harbour clear of obstruction by selecting tree species that are tall growing, with trunks clear of low growing branches;
- ↗ Add new trees to reinforce the park composition, including completing the park edge with ornamental trees and accenting the park entries; and
- ↗ Reinforce passive recreation areas with planting groups to create intimate spaces and to provide visual cues to visitors that this is not an area for organized sports.

Street and Intersections

- ↗ Emphasize streets as the unifying element of the Dartmouth Common;
- ↗ Enhance image routes, which provide notable views, and street connections as a way to repatriate streets and roads back into the Dartmouth Common, i.e., Wyse Road, Nantucket Avenue, Victoria Road and Thistle Street;
- ↗ Plant all streets surrounding the Dartmouth Common with street trees. Where possible trees should also be planted on grassed medians;
- ↗ Use landscaping to highlight building entries and pedestrian connections to the street where building entries front onto the street;
- ↗ Accentuate key intersections at public streets with additional landscaping and coordinate landscaping with the architectural treatment of corner sites;
- ↗ Select plant species that are non-invasive and tolerant of urban conditions; and
- ↗ Complement planted areas with hard landscaping elements such as special pavements (colour, texture, pattern, etc.), architectural features (trellises, screen walls, planters, etc.), and site furniture.

6.1.2 Site Amenities

Guidelines for site amenities include:

- ↗ Progressively upgrade all entries to the open space recreation areas;
- ↗ Upgrade crossing points at adjacent roadways and pedestrian linkages to the Common;
- ↗ Upgrade and maintain lighting in the Common;
- ↗ Provide new public toilets at proposed sports field;
- ↗ Progressively upgrade all park amenities in the Common, with particular attention to design and location;
- ↗ Install more seating, as a priority, in locations with harbour views;
- ↗ Ensure good design principles drive the development and implementation of improved signage within the Common;
- ↗ Develop an interpretative plan for the Common, including information about its history, and tree and wildlife species; and
- ↗ Develop new amphitheatre bowl.

6.2 Architectural Guidelines

Architectural guidelines for the Dartmouth Common area illustrate how, through consideration of aesthetic and functional requirements, new buildings can be designed to address human scale and contribute to an active pedestrian environment. In addition to enhancing the visual prominence of buildings, the guidelines recommend reducing the prominence of parking areas by locating them at the rear of buildings or effectively screening them from adjacent pedestrian areas and public streets. The guidelines discuss the creation of a convenient, accessible and linked pedestrian realm. This should be a barrier-free network of sidewalks and walkways that clearly links precincts to each other and to surrounding areas.

Dartmouth Shopping Centre and Future Commercial Buildings along Wyse and Nantucket

The Dartmouth Shopping Centre presents a significant opportunity to intensify the Wyse Road/Nantucket Avenue intersection while integrating the surrounding neighbourhoods. There is support under the HRM Regional Plan and HRM-by-Design for intensifying and revitalizing urban areas like the Dartmouth Shopping Centre and Wyse Road / Nantucket area. Guidelines for the redevelopment of the Dartmouth Shopping Centre and other future commercial/mixed use buildings around the Wyse Road and Nantucket Avenue intersection include:

- ↗ Create distinctive building entries that highlight façades and enhance the key intersection of Wyse and Nantucket;
- ↗ Accentuate corner sites by designing buildings that relate to both street fronts and provide pedestrian access to the buildings from the corners;

- ↗ Ensure visibility into buildings from ground level facades facing public streets and the pedestrian realm;
- ↗ Ensure that large blank, unarticulated walls do not face the street and pedestrian realm. Blank walls include both windowless walls and walls with reflective or highly tinted glass facades;
- ↗ Ensure minimum ground level (floor-to-ceiling) heights are 4 metres (13 feet);
- ↗ Ensure the highest level of architectural detailing on facades facing public streets and the pedestrian realm;
- ↗ Locate parking areas to the rear, in underground or in concealed above-grade structures;
- ↗ Ensure development is visually and physically well-connected to the surrounding neighbourhoods and districts through cross-streets, mid-block connections and appealing buildings or landmarks at visibly strategic locations;
- ↗ Define important intersections and gateways clearly with well designed buildings that give prominence to their corners, the butting-out of sidewalks and public art;
- ↗ Ensure that building heights and massing transition down to adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods;
- ↗ Allow generally minimum 4 storey and maximum 6 storey heights along Wyse Road and adjacent to low-rise residential areas.
- ↗ Allow for taller buildings to be accommodated in appropriate locations where adequate transitions in height to adjacent low-rise residential uses can be achieved (particularly at the Wyse/Nantucket intersection);
- ↗ Development on the Wyse Road / Nantucket Avenue corner should follow similar design guidelines for downtown Halifax as set out in HRMbyDesign. that recommend specific minimums and maximum heights to ensure that massing, material and architectural articulation reinforce a 'base', 'body' and 'top' to a building creating an appropriate urban face; and
- ↗ Encourage high quality contemporary designs and pay attention to proportions and materials where adjacent to existing residential house-forms.

Dartmouth Sportsplex Extension

The extension to the Dartmouth Sportsplex should unfold in a way that makes it easily accessible to all residents (in particular transit users and students of the neighboring schools), accommodates parking in a way that does not result in paving over the entire Central Common, and creates above

ground (or possibly even underground) parking structures¹¹ that have non-intrusive and attractive facades.

Guidelines for the extension of the Dartmouth Sportsplex include:

- ↗ Ensure high-quality facade on northern side of the building facing the new Metro Transit Terminal to create a pedestrian-friendly environment on the bus terminal platform;
- ↗ Ensure an easily legible, accentuated main entrance to the lobby on the northern side of the building that is easily accessible from the new bus terminal platform and parking areas; and
- ↗ Guarantee a high-quality, non-intrusive façade screening of new above ground parking structure.

New Metro Transit Bridge Terminal

The new bus terminal should be built in a way that relates positively to its neighbours, is enjoyed by all residents (and not only those transferring buses), is built in a way that consumes the least amount of land, fosters future transit oriented development and gateway buildings at the corner of Nantucket Avenue and Wyse Road, enhances the functionality of all other public lands tenants, and is built with highest design standards.

Guidelines for the New Metro Transit Terminal include:

- ↗ Design a high quality transparent terminal building that contributes to a pleasant experience for bus riders waiting on that platform;
- ↗ Design an inspiring, light-weight, translucent canopy spanning over the entire length of the platform; and
- ↗ Ensure that the platform can accommodate pedestrian circulation between Thistle Street and Nantucket Avenue.

6.3 Safety Guidelines

Responsible landscape design provides consideration for health, safety and crime prevention, especially for public areas, such as the proposed precincts identified within the Dartmouth Common. Whether the facilities are public, like a walking trail, or private, such as a business parking lot, consideration must be given to safe creating places that discourage crime. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a design strategy tool that should be included in the design of any public area on the Dartmouth

¹¹ A parking structure on the lands between the current Sportsplex building and the Scotiabank property would be in accordance with the 1994 amendment to the Dartmouth Common Act. For any other location, a further amendment to the Dartmouth Common Act would be required.

Common lands. Appendix C provides an overview of the key elements of the CPTED approach.

The CPTED Safety Audit conducted in 2003 of the Urban Wilderness Park (discussed in Section 3.3.3) provided six recommendations for the area including not calling it a 'wilderness' park which implies little to no maintenance is needed. Other recommendations included continued maintenance of the understory vegetation; the addition of lighting in and around the park; clear, readable signs posted at entrances and exits advertising the hours that the Park is open; fencing the perimeter of the Park to better control security and formalize entrances and exits; and that pathways be widened and formalized to create a sense of place and security. Since the 2003 Site Audit, a vegetation management program has been implemented, with some success in providing opportunity for natural surveillance, although a fence has not been erected around the Park.

The lessons learned from the Urban Wilderness Park can be extrapolated to the Dartmouth Sportsplex parking lot, which also has incidents of vandalism. How pedestrians and vehicles move through the space, particularly with the new proposed Metro Transit configuration and proposed expansion of the Sportsplex should be considered during the design of the Metro Transit facility. It is not enough for Metro Transit to only address how they might secure their facility. Being a part of the Common, Metro Transit has a responsibility to ensure that through the design of their facility they do not displace existing problems nor create new ones for the other tenants in the area.

Guidelines for site safety include:

- Provide clear, controlled access to the space;
- Provide opportunity for surveillance;
- Identify and design for gathering points and places of refuge; and
- Design lighting that provides clear safe, access throughout the site.

6.4 Public Art Guidelines

HRM adopted its first Public Art Policy in 2008 as a commitment to providing for more and diverse works of art in the public realm. The policy places priority on siting and staging public art at strategic areas within the HRM including the Halifax and Dartmouth waterfront, major parks and public places, regional streetscapes and HRM-owned community facilities. The Dartmouth Common, therefore, is well-positioned for future public art investment. The HRM identifies four categories of public art: Art Works of

Remembrance, Expressive Artworks, Functional Artworks, and Community Artworks (see the HRM Public Art Policy, July 25, 2008 for details).

Guidelines for public art in the Common include:

- Any new or renovated publically accessible facilities should allocate a minimum of 1% of the total construction costs toward the installation of public art including the new transit facility;
- Artists working on a public art installation should be involved as early as possible in the architectural/engineering design process; and
- Consideration should be given for the installation of expressive and extraordinary artworks at high profile sites to reflect the cultural significance and importance of the Dartmouth Common locally and regionally.

Implementing Action

- Complete a public art site plan to determine opportunities and potential locations for installing public art works. Part of the public art site plan should include the development of gateway entry/exit features discussed in the Master Plan Layout (Chapter 5). While they can be different pieces, they should have a common language that allows them to act as recognizable markers denoting the edge of the Common.

6.5 Programming Guidelines

Detailed programming and events plans are beyond the scope of this Master Plan; however, establishing guidelines for how future programming can help achieve the community's vision for how the Common will be used by Dartmouth residents, HRM citizens and visitors. More work will be required to establish detailed programming guidelines and development initiatives through future phases of planning for the Dartmouth Common.

Guidelines for programming and special use include:

- Strike a balance between everyday informal use and enjoyment of the Common with support for special events and a diversity of programmed activities;
- Enhance public use and visitation on the Common by supporting events and activities that offer new and traditional experiences for people of all ages and all abilities within the Dartmouth Community and all of HRM;
- Raise the profile of the Dartmouth Common as a historically and culturally significant place through events and programs that celebrate community, culture and history;

- ↗ Enhance connections and shared use between municipal, school, and community facilities on the Common through joint public use and programming opportunities;
- ↗ Build on the role of Downtown Dartmouth as a destination and events venue by supporting the Alderney Landing Cultural and Convention Centre and Dartmouth Waterfront through complementary infrastructure and events programming;
- ↗ Support a diversity of public activities and use of the Common by encouraging a range of active and passive recreation experiences which are consistent with the *Dartmouth Common Act* and vision of this Master Plan;
- ↗ Locate programmed events on the Dartmouth Common in accordance with defined precincts to ensure the activity is consistent with the character and capacity of the space and the surrounding neighbourhood;
- ↗ Minimize conflicts between regular park users and events by maintaining a schedule and operational guidelines that give priority to public access and unobstructed use;
- ↗ Support enhanced use (and user experience) by refurbishing and developing infrastructure and amenities at high traffic sites, gateway areas and nodes which enhance both everyday use and activities and special events and activities;
- ↗ Encourage the integration of city, school and community facilities including joint use agreements for programming sports fields, indoor facilities and open spaces; and
- ↗ Encourage non-profit, community and cultural events and restrict those of a primarily commercial nature (the Dartmouth Sportsplex indoor facilities are an exception).

Implementing Actions

- ↗ Develop detailed programming and events guidelines for the Dartmouth Common within two years from the adoption of this Plan;
- ↗ Should the school facilities on the Common be surplus to the Municipality in future, a public consultation process will be initiated to seek public input into future use;
- ↗ The future decommissioning, conversion or development of sports fields on the Common will be determined by the policy directions under HRM's Community Facility Master Plan and guided by the Dartmouth Common Master Plan objectives and vision;
- ↗ The feasibility of developing a regulation size sports field on the Dartmouth Common will be determined in conjunction with HRSB and the Province and guided by the design concepts in this master plan;

- HRM will work with the HRSB to develop a model of shared use for Dartmouth High School and Bicentennial School to improve community access and programming to indoor and outdoor facilities; and
- HRM, HRSB and Dartmouth Sportsplex will enter into a joint-use agreement to enhance community access and programming opportunities including community access gyms, arts and culture spaces and opportunities to achieve these objectives through the development of a fieldhouse addition to the Dartmouth Sportsplex.