

PARK PLANNING IS UNDERWAY

What's happening?

Parks and Recreation staff have started the park planning process to improve and expand the safe, accessible, and sustainable use of Gorsebrook Park.

To accommodate this process, the park planning project was added to the Parks and Recreation 2018/2019 budget and business plan.

Why?

Park issues and opportunities have been brought forward by Councillor Mason, organized groups, residents, and operations staff.

Park plans are useful tools to direct park enhancements over time and to ensure that work is in-keeping with public expectation.

Your role

We want your feedback on the following design concept. Help us refine this vision by submitting your comments,

- Are these concepts a reflection of public feedback?
- Do you see elements that you like? Why?
- Do you see elements that you don't like? Why?
- Is there anything missing?

Timeline



GORSEBROOK PARK

HALIFAX

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Fall 2015

Councillor Waye Mason hosted a public meeting on October 29, 2015 at Saint Mary's University for the community to discuss park values and future wants and needs for Gorsebrook Park. Present at this event were sport groups, a local community association, adjacent school and university communities, and residents.

Important park values identified by the community include,

- Multi-use, multi-purpose spaces;
- Safe and accessible spaces;
- Park circulation and connections;
- Park sustainability;
- Multi-season use;
- Inclusion and involvement of community;
- Park aesthetics.

An emphasis was placed on improving,

- **Maintenance** (e.g. garbage collection, fresh paint on benches and box lacrosse boards);
- **Site safety** (e.g. improved entrances, lighting, wide paths, clear signage)
- **Reconfiguration of sporting areas** (e.g. ball diamond, tennis);
- **Opportunities for gathering and socialization** (e.g. picnic tables, benches);
- **Park naturalization** (e.g. introduction of native species, no-mow areas);
- **Production of food** (e.g. expand community garden);
- **Access to facilities** (e.g. washrooms, running water);
- **Park beautification** (e.g. gardens); and
- **Partnerships for ongoing park improvements** (e.g. universities, local sponsors and vendors, Province on future use of school sites).

Spring 2016

The Sierra Club of Halifax ran a public information session on May 19, 2016 to gather feedback on opportunities for tree planting in Gorsebrook Park. Generally, the public was supportive of trees within the park if plantings were sensitive to park uses (e.g. sports fields, ball diamonds, sledding). Participants labeled park maps with desired planting locations and desired species types. Another community event was hosted on July 27, 2016 when HRM urban forest crews planted trees within the park

Winter 2018

An open house was hosted on December 10, 2018 by Parks and Recreation staff to unveil a conceptual park design that was informed by previously gathered public comments. The park concept was also reviewed by sport and user groups to determine how park changes would influence their use.

After review of the design concept, the public focused their comments in 10 park program areas,

- **Walking paths**, residents generally support the idea of a path network within the park, especially if it improves park access, but are cautious of disturbing existing park uses and natural site drainage;
- **Parking**, Lundys Lane is a difficult parking area, but residents fear that losing parking would be a loss for the community;
- **Lighting**, some residents support the idea of lighted paths, but that lighting too late into the night is bothersome to neighbours and may encourage after hours use;
- **Washrooms and water access**, residents were supportive of access to facilities in the park, but acknowledge that frequent maintenance will be important;
- **Sport courts**, the community does not want to see a loss of sport court access and would like to see the addition of pickle-ball courts. Noise from existing courts was noted as being undesirable within the park and that moving the courts next to the ball hockey court would make this problem worse;
- **Sports fields**, residents want to ensure that user groups are happy with the 'great lawn' and that it does not limit their use of the park. The NS Cricket Association welcomes the addition of the great lawn as a space that can be used for games or practice. Some residents would like the addition of new play options, like disc golf;
- **Community garden**, the Peninsula Urban Garden Society is happy with the current provision of garden beds. The community is hesitant to plant fruit-bearing trees because of pests;
- **Sledding hill**, paths, fencing, lighting, trees, and benches should be organized to avoid safety conflicts. This is the most popular winter activity within the park;
- **Enforcement**, the community believes that better enforcement is needed in the park (e.g. dog off-leash, exclusive use of facilities like tennis courts);
- **Maintenance**, it is felt that better attention to park maintenance is required (e.g. new garbage cans, more frequent park clean-ups, less frequent grass cutting in dry weather, fixing damaged benches).

GORSEBROOK PARK

HALIFAX

EXISTING CONDITIONS



GORSEBROOK PARK

HALIFAX

PARK LAYOUT CONCEPT



Design rationale

There has been little change within Gorsebrook Park in almost 40 years, yet the population and density of residents in the south end of Halifax has increased. Recreation trends have shifted to favour multifunctionality over exclusive-use by park scheduling. The purpose of this project is manifold; to improve the park-user experience; to encourage opportunities for physical activity; but also that this plan act as a guiding document, so as resources become available, features can be implemented in a coordinated way.

At the heart of this concept plan is an open space that is available for the community to use for recreation even during heavily-scheduled play. This concept also aims to mitigate or remove existing conflicts such as pathways in close proximity to the baseball diamond, physical site impediments (e.g. steep slopes, inaccessible surfaces), and pedestrian traffic through the parking area.

The 'great lawn' is an unscheduled open space that can be used for pick-up sport, for picnicking, or for events. The lawn is ringed by an accessible walking network that can be used in all seasons. A centralized park pavilion with a washroom and shaded seating area becomes an important park gathering node with opportunities to re-establish water play in the park. Relocating sport courts to the northern park boundary will help to activate an otherwise dark fence line and removes tall chain-link fencing from the centre of the park. Clear and marked park entrances, park seating, lighting, and improved sightlines within the park will make the park a safer and more enjoyable experience for park users, in all seasons.



Wellington Street entrance from Lundys Lane.

Based on community requests to not remove all parking on Lundys Lane, this concept proposes the removal of only one bay of parking to establish a safe driveway and parking width and for the addition of a separated pedestrian sidewalk from Wellington Street into the park. A driveway turn-around could become an accessible park entrance where pick-up and drop-offs can occur. This turn-around is also a place for community garden users to drop-off garden materials before parking their vehicles. Ornamental bollards will be placed to prevent cars from driving into the park without permission.

A formal park gateway is proposed along the Wellington Street entrance with park signage, lighting, and seating.



Inglis Street entrance from the playground.

To improve park visibility and circulation, a straightened path connection is envisioned with access directly to Inglis Street opposite the Saint Mary's Science Centre. A formal park gateway is proposed at Inglis Street with park signage, lighting, and seating.

To improve year-round accessibility, a paved path with lighting is proposed. To separate school parking, to contain the play space, and to offer additional seating, a low wooden bollard and rail could be included to define the edges of the school yard and the playground.

It is proposed that the existing swinging gate be removed. The existing boulders could be relocated closer to the playground as a play feature.



'Great lawn' as viewed from Robie Street entrance.

To create more versatile and flexible space, a 'great lawn' for unscheduled activity ringed by a paved walking-loop is envisioned in the centre of the park. Measured walking distances along paths would help users to keep track of personal distance goals. An enhancement of the existing Gorsebrook ball diamond could accommodate the removal of the St. Francis diamond without a loss of scheduled hours. Pathway lighting and benches are proposed. No obstructions are proposed that would interfere with sledding on St. Francis Hill.

A centralized pavilion with washrooms and shaded seating area is proposed between the playground and great lawn. This pavilion area is proposed to be a formal gathering and event area with power connections and the potential to re-establish water play within the park. An area for recreation storage will reduce the need for seasonal storage solutions.



Robie Street park entrance, looking east.

It is proposed that a more formal park entrance be established with a relocated park sign, opportunities for seating, and lighting for increase park visibility. A coordinated gateway design and materials is recommended for all major park entrances.

A reoriented and regraded path from Robie Street to lessen the slope and make the surface more accessible is proposed to meet this central walking-loop. It is envisioned that an additional path be installed that connects Gorsebrook School to the Robie entrance, which also acts as an access and launch point for winter sledding.