

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 15.1.5
Halifax Regional Council
October 29, 2019

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by 

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 18, 2019

SUBJECT: **Lake Echo District Park – Park Plan**

ORIGIN

2018/19 Parks and Recreation Budget and Business Plan deliverable.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if
(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve the Lake Echo District Park Planning Report as a guiding document for future improvements to Lake Echo District Park.

BACKGROUND

The Lake Echo District Park occupies 2.35 Ha (5.80 acres) on the north-western side of Lake Echo along Highway 7 (Attachment A). The major features of the park include:

- the Lake Echo Community Centre (LECC) that is comprised of a gymnasium, meeting rooms, washrooms, and an adjoining paved parking lot;
- an informal gravel lot along Highway 7 that includes a community mailbox;
- Orenda Canoe Club, which includes a recently renovated building, a gravel parking lot, and floating docks;
- a grassed area around the LECC housing a covered deck and a community garden;
- a municipally-supervised beach;
- forested hillsides; and
- a boat launch comprised of a gravel ramp between the beach and canoe club.

Additional information about the park is contained in the Park Planning Report (Attachment B).

Over the last number of years, the area Councillor, community groups and associations, and residents have identified a number of park issues and opportunities with the park. The public has increasingly asked for a more diverse range of active and passive recreation options. Subsequently, Regional Council directed that a park plan be prepared through the adoption of the 2018/19 Parks and Recreation Business Plan.

Work on various park plans stemming from the same 2018/19 Business Plan is currently underway and the plans will be presented to Regional Council at a future date. Council will need to consider capital priorities from those park plans in subsequent capital budgets.

DISCUSSION

Park plans, prepared by municipal staff with community engagement, have been developed in situations where a plan is needed to help address functional space issues and establish a sense of place in parks that are often important community spaces. Such is the case in the Lake Echo District Park, which has a variety of uses, including a community centre, paddling club, beach, motorized boat launch, and a level gravel lot that was the site of a former service station, in an important park within the community and overall district.

In proceeding with the development of the park plan, a recreation needs assessment to determine the best use of the existing park was conducted with a full evaluation of:

- Physical site condition;
- Park service delivery;
- Community demographics;
- Nearby recreation facilities;
- Recreation facilities booking data; and
- Direction identified in municipal plans and guiding documents.

To confirm assumptions about the park and to gather community park values, wants, and needs, staff consulted with the community. There were two opportunities for the community to engage in the park planning process:

- Phase 1 – September 29 and October 15, 2018

On September 29, 2018, Parks and Recreation staff hosted a pop-up engagement at the LECC as part of the Lion's Club 'Boil and Blast' event. A more formal park workshop was hosted on October 15, 2018. The purpose of both events was to collect the park issues and opportunities as observed by the community. Over 70 responses were gathered with some of the more frequently discussed items centering around: opportunities to improve the aquatic experience at the beach; developing a walking trail on the park property; establishing a new and deeper boat launch on parkland or on

land to be acquired; establishing covered seating within a gazebo or shade structure; controlling weed growth in the lake; and establishing a play space for children

- Phase 2 – March 19, 2019

As a follow-up to the October 15th workshop session, an open house was hosted to unveil a conceptual design that was informed by previously gathered public comments. The public was invited to provide feedback and engage in conversation with staff. Residents were generally supportive of the proposed concept, with public comments focusing on: reaffirming the importance of boating access, the support for paved pathways, the support for a beach-side play space, the backing of an enhanced beach area, increasing parking capacity, making the driveway and parking layout safer, establishing washroom access in the LECC, moving the Canada Post boxes to the parking lot, and the support for outdoor public art.

Comments were also accepted via phone and email from September 29, 2018 to May 1, 2019. Changes to the conceptual design were made on the basis of the public consultation.

Findings

From the assessments, several key findings emerged, including that:

- There are inefficiencies in the way the site is organized which presents challenges to the use of and movement through the park;
- There are inefficiencies in the way the waterfront is organized which presents challenges to lake access;
- The lack of the publicly accessible washrooms and drinking water prevents the full day-use of the park;
- There are well-established community groups that lack clear direction regarding opportunities for community involvement, stewardship, and sponsorship;
- Ad hoc park upgrades over time have overlooked site safety and accessibility; and
- A balance between stand-alone recreation facilities and activated open space should be improved.

Park Plan Highlights

From the Findings, the park plan suggests a number of improvements, with six main program areas that are contained in the concept plan:

1. Lake Echo Community Centre

To open the upper lot for expanded greenspace, it is proposed that staff work with Canada Post to evaluate the possibility of moving the mail boxes to the LECC parking lot and take advantage of a single point of entry to the property. To improve safety and circulation for vehicles, the parking lot driveway should be widened throughout the parking area. A detailed design for the parking area should include an extended drainage culvert, a relocated designated smoking area (DSA) shelter, and a relocated community centre garbage bin. A formalized path from Highway 7 along the western side of the parking area would create a safe entry point for pedestrians. To better connect the beach to the LECC parking area, it is envisioned that a new trail would begin on the eastern side of the LECC at the parking lot. It is proposed that staff work closely with the LECC board to ensure that changes would be complimentary to uses within the centre.

2. Park Entrance and Driveway

It is proposed that trees along Highway 7 be thinned to improve sightlines to the driveway entrance. By realigning the LECC and Orenda driveways to meet at 90 degrees, traffic flow is made safer and it provides an opportunity for pedestrian access across the driveway to the upper lot. It is proposed that staff work with the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal on the possibility of changes to path and driveway approaches at Highway 7. The proposed upgrades to the driveway itself include a curb and gutter to better direct stormwater, contain loose surface materials, and control parking on the road shoulder. Requests from the

community for an expanded community garden indicate the need for an area that allows for garden expansion. Illustrated in the concept is a new garden area on the north side of the LECC at the park entrance. It is recommended that staff explore options for making the existing REC sign more visible (e.g. raise its elevation on its existing footprint, relocate to a higher elevation, among other solutions).

3. LECC Connector Pathway

A paved pathway connection is proposed to start at the LECC parking lot and connect directly to the beach before continuing to the upper lot at Highway 7. A paved path network that is separated from car traffic would allow park users to safely recreate on the property. Some slope stabilization or wall development might be necessary along the shared Orenda slope. A wooden bollard or post and rail would be a helpful barrier between foot traffic and the drainage area. Access to Orenda from the LECC pathway is optional but would improve connection between facilities. The introduction of paved accessible parking in the shared LECC/Orenda parking lot would allow for easy access to the beach.

4. Waterfront Enhancement

Improved accessibility is central to the enhanced beach area. A paved path connects the LECC parking lot to the beach and to the upper lot. Along this sloping path, seating walls are proposed to be built into the slope as park seating and as a gathering space. A gazebo is proposed at the base of the hill overlooking the beach area. Staff will work with the Lake Echo Lion's Club who are planning a community gazebo for the park. Incorporating electrical connections and lighting will allow this shelter to also double as community event space. There is an opportunity for a small beachside playground with unique play opportunities not already offered in the community. This play space could also double as public art or interpretation of site history (e.g. forestry or quarry history). Proposed upgrades to the beach itself include the removal of aquatic weeds, the addition of finer sand, and seating. All upgrades are to be planned in accordance with Nova Scotia Environment policy and approval. Although outside of the scope of this project, future trail connections may be evaluated along the head of the lake but would be subject to Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal policy and approval processes. Following the recommendations of the forthcoming Washroom and Drinking Fountain Strategy, staff will explore an updated agreement with the LECC to coordinate washroom and change room access within the LECC for beach users.

5. Upper Lot Park Establishment

The proposed conditions for the upper lot are characterized by a paved walking loop with a central lawn. The community has requested the addition of sport courts and multipurpose play areas. Illustrated are two pickleball courts, but this could also be modified to be one pickleball court and one multipurpose sports court. The lawn area is designed to remain open for community use with benches overlooking the water. A raised berm with tree planting is proposed along Highway 7 to create a barrier between highway traffic and park users. It is proposed that staff work with Halifax Transit to create an improved bus stop landing that is connected into the path network. The naturalized east facing slope will remain with some tree thinning to open the view to the lake.

6. Boat Launch

The existing boat launch is regularly used when the lake levels are high but was identified by the public as a concern due to its proximity to people swimming, boating, and walking to the beach. Upon further review, it was also found that the slope of the ramp and space available for trailer parking is insufficient to support safe water access. An on-site alternative for a boat-launch is not possible without significant tree clearing, grading, and a loss of community centre parking. Therefore, the concept plan recommends its removal. HRM owns other waterfront land on Lake Echo (e.g. Country Lake Drive Park, Partridge Nest Drive Park, and Wadlow Park), but the suitability of each location has not been fully evaluated. Consequently, a further review of boat launch alternatives in the community should be explored.

A number of the key ideas within the park plan would necessitate a reorganization of the park and in some ways change the relationship of user groups within it. An example of this is a possible reliance on the community centre to support the beach. Such arrangements would ultimately require discussions between user groups and the municipality to determine the feasibility of these type of arrangements.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Currently, the Lake Echo District Park does not have a plan to guide management decisions. As a result, decades of ad-hoc upgrades have defined the management program. Based on a fulsome review of existing park conditions; nearby recreation facilities; community demographics; recreation booking data; guiding municipal policy; and issues and opportunities identified by the community; a concept plan with five defined program areas has been developed that would be transformational to the community. The approval of the park plan will establish a guiding document for future upgrades. A phased approach to implementation can be rationalized in future Business Plans for conversion of the park according to the plan. If approved, the production of a detailed design would be the next step to fine-tune program areas and project phases, pending future budget approvals.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications to the recommendations in this report. The possible future capital expenditures would be considered in subsequent capital budgets during the business planning process and prioritized against other capital requests as opportunities and capacity allow.

There are considerable pressures on the capital budget and with respect to park projects; the primary focus continues to be on state of good repair of existing assets. As a result, the recommended park improvements are not currently included in capital budgets. However, the recommended park improvements outlined in this and subsequent park plans will be important to improve the overall quality of HRM's parkland portfolio. Recommendations will be included in future capital budgets when components require repairs and opportunities for park improvements arise.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation in this report. The risks considered rate low. To determine this, consideration was given to operational, financial and reputational risk.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was held on September 29 and October 15, 2018, and on March 19, 2019. Comments were also accepted by phone and email from September 29, 2018 to May 1, 2019.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The park plan observes that there has been an emergence of aquatic weeds at the Lake Echo beach. As improvements are made to the park facilities, ongoing removal and maintenance of the weeds will also be considered. Given the shallow water at the Lake Echo boat launch, vehicles are required to back into the lake to an unsafe depth to launch a boat, this potentially transfers oil, gas, and other contaminants. The park plan recommends the boat launch removal from a safety perspective, but will also address pollution issues.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council could choose to approve or request changes to the park plans as presented. This may require additional review, possible community consultation, and a separate staff report.
2. Regional Council could choose not to approve the proposed park plan. This is not recommended based upon the need for a park plan to guide future capital decisions for the park.

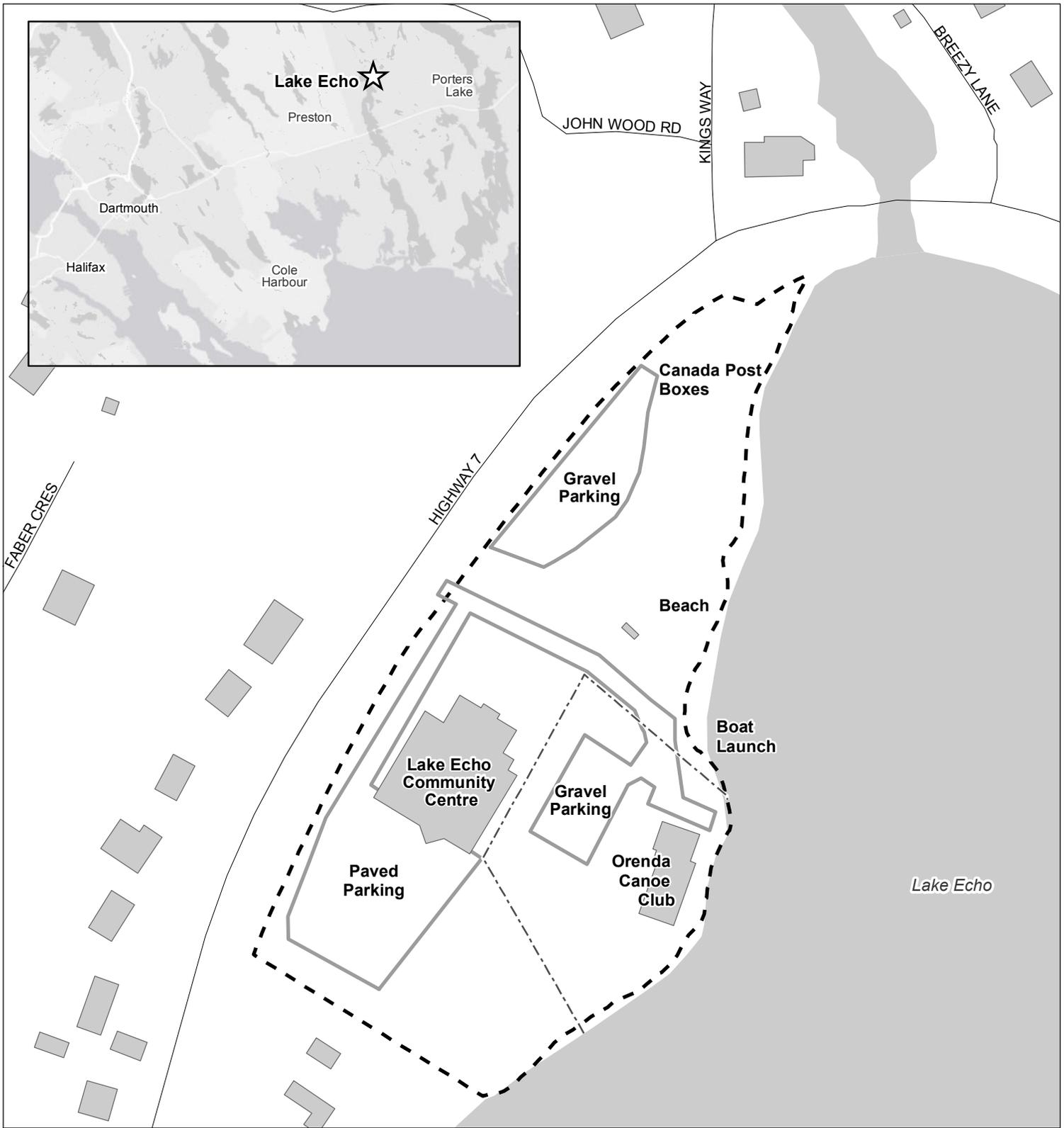
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Lake Echo District Park – Location Map

Attachment B – Lake Echo District Park - Park Planning Report

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

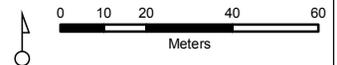
Report Prepared by: Stephen Cushing, Landscape Architect, Policy & Planning, Parks & Recreation,
902.292.1565



LAKE ECHO DISTRICT PARK - LOCATION MAP

- Orenda Canoe Club Lease Area
- Building
- - - HRM Parkland

HALIFAX
Parks & Recreation
Policy & Planning



HALIFAX LAKE ECHO DISTRICT PARK PARK PLANNING REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2019



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I	5 PARK PLAN	11
1 INTRODUCTION	1	5.1 Design Concept	11
1.1 Project Background	1	5.2 Functional Diagram	12
1.2 Purpose & Scope	1	5.3 Conceptual Plan	13
1.3 Site History	2	5.4 Program Spaces	14
2 INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS	3	6 IMPLEMENTATION	19
2.1 Evaluation of Parks and Recreation Need	3	6.1 Timeline	19
2.2 Park Characteristics	3	6.2 Project Phasing	19
2.3 Park Service Delivery	4	6.3 Project Costs	19
2.4 Community Demographics	5	6.4 Phasing Diagram	20
2.5 Municipal Plans and Guiding Documents	6		
2.6 Site Analysis	7		
3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	8		
3.1 Values Gathering	8		
3.2 Presentation of Ideas	8		
4 FINDINGS	9		
4.1 Key Findings and Actions	9		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Lake Echo District Park is located at the head of Lake Echo along Highway 7. Over the last number of years, the area Councillor, community groups and associations, and residents have identified a number of park issues and opportunities that required attention. The public is increasingly asking for a more diverse range of active and passive recreation options. Subsequently, Regional Council directed that a park plan be prepared through the adoption of the 2018/19 Parks and Recreation Business Plan.

In the development of this park plan, the following were analyzed:

- the history of the site;
- park and recreation needs;
- site characteristics;
- community demographics;
- proximity to existing park features;
- facility usage; and
- municipal plans and guiding documents.

With the above, the public was engaged to consider the analysis that was undertaken and review preliminary park plans through engagement events in September and October of 2018, in March of 2019, and further online engagement.

FINDINGS

From the background analysis and public engagement, several findings emerged:

- There are inefficiencies in the way in which the site is organized and this presents challenges to the use of and movement through the park;
- There are inefficiencies in the way in which the waterfront is organized and this presents challenges to lake access;
- The lack of publicly accessible washrooms and drinking water prevent the full day-use of the park;
- There are well-established community groups and individuals that lack clear direction regarding opportunities for community involvement, stewardship, sponsorship;
- Ad hoc park upgrades over time have overlooked site safety and accessibility; and
- A balance between stand-alone recreation facilities and activated open space should be improved.

PARK PLAN

Based on the findings, a park plan that includes a functional diagram, a concept plan with a focus on a series of program spaces, and an implementation plan with phasing has been developed.

At the heart of the park plan is the implementation of well-connected open space enhancements. An important connection illustrated in this plan is a paved path that connects the Community Centre parking lot to the beach and to the upper portion of the park along Highway 7. The upper lot that was formerly a gas station is envisioned to be a new open space with a walking loop, seating, sport courts, and a landscaped-buffer from highway traffic. As an existing park asset, it is envisioned that the beach area also be enhanced with seating, shelter, play equipment, the clearing of aquatic weeds, and beach surface improvements. A solution to an unsafe boat launch requires further evaluation to identify an alternate location with suitable set-backs and approach to the lake. It is recommended that public access to washrooms within the community centre be coordinated with the community board.

The park plan serves as an overall guiding document for future park redevelopment. The implementation plan outlines a sequence of improvements that can be realized through subsequent budget cycles, dependent upon the availability of capital funding.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Lake Echo District Park is located at the head of Lake Echo along Highway 7. Over the last number of years, the area Councillor, community groups and associations, and residents have identified a number of park issues and opportunities that required attention. Subsequently, Regional Council directed that a park plan be prepared through the adoption of the 2018/19 Parks and Recreation Business Plan.

1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

For decades, the focus of publicly-accessible outdoor recreation in the park has been the Lake Echo beach. The public is increasingly asking for a more diverse range of active and passive recreation options. Recreation trends have shifted to favour multifunctional park spaces that encourage healthy lifestyles. The purpose of this plan is to act as a guiding document, so as resources become available, features can be implemented in a coordinated way. The plan serves to improve the park-user experience and to enable active and passive activities.

In its current state, the Lake Echo District Park (Figure 1) occupies 2.35 Ha (5.80 acres) on the north-western side of Lake Echo along Highway 7. On the south of the property sits the Lake Echo Community Centre (LECC) with paved parking for approximately 85 vehicles. A lower gravel parking lot shared with the Orenda Boat Club holds approximately 20-25 cars. North of Orenda along the shore of Lake

Echo is a small municipally-supervised beach. The northernmost portion of the property is a gravel and asphalt lot that is not currently programmed by Parks and Recreation.

Within the park boundary, but outside the scope of this project is the land occupied by

the Orenda Canoe Club, which has a land lease agreement with the municipality until April 2038. The main access driveway through the park and the gravel parking lot to the west of the canoe club is to remain shared with park and community centre users.



FIGURE 1: AERIAL PHOTO OF THE LAKE ECHO COMMUNITY CENTRE AND BEACH.

1.3 SITE HISTORY

Permanent settlement in this area was first recorded in the mid 1700s in nearby Lawrencetown. Farming and fishing was a significant part of community livelihood for some time. Settlement in Lake Echo dates back to 1818, but the suburban development visible today came much later in the late 1960s with peak development in the early to mid 1970s.

Before it was used for recreation, the Lake Echo District Park was formerly the location of a sawmill and lumber processing facility. The lake was essential in this process for the movement and storage of lumber (Figure 2,3).

The northernmost portion of the park property was acquired by the municipality from Irving Oil Company Limited in 1998. This land formerly housed a gas station which had been in operation since 1958. Currently, this empty gravel and asphalt lot serves as seasonal parking, pop-up yard sale activity, and is an access point for community mailboxes.

In 1974, the Lake Echo Recreation Association leased part of the waterfront land for boating. In the early 1990s, the former Municipality of Halifax County acquired the title from the Province conditional upon the property being used for recreation.

The Lake Echo Community Centre was built in the 1980s with an addition in the late 1990s. Lake Echo is outside the HRM serviced boundary so the facility draws from a well and is connected to a septic tank and septic

field. Until 2011, the Lake Echo Community Centre was under the management of the Lake Echo Lions Club. Regional Council approved a management take over of the facility and approved a lease between the Lions Club and HRM for exclusive use of meeting space within the building. A community board of volunteers was established in 2012 to oversee program and building operations. The Lake Echo Community Recreation Society continues to oversee the management of the facility.



FIGURE 2: THE PROCESSING OF LUMBER WAS AN ACTIVE INDUSTRY IN LAKE ECHO, N.D.



FIGURE 3: A MURAL IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE ILLUSTRATES THE INDUSTRIAL PAST OF THE PROPERTY.

2 INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

2.1 EVALUATION OF PARK AND RECREATION NEED

In this section, a summary of existing municipal park asset data, supporting research and best practices, and site visit data is presented, with a focus on:

- Park service delivery;
- Community demographics;
- Facility usage;
- Municipal guiding documents; and
- Physical site condition

2.2 PARK CHARACTERISTICS

SITE AREA

2.35 ha (5.80 acres).

TOPOGRAPHY

The park parcel slopes from Highway 7 towards Lake Echo. The park's highest point is at the main driveway entrance (~20 m). The park slopes to the south east to the lowest point (~10 m) just south of the Orenda Canoe Club.

VEGETATION

Approximately 50% of the park parcel is treed, the largest forested parcel is the immediate south of the community centre. Small patches of naturalized vegetation accounts for approximately 10% of the park. The remaining land cover (40%) is occupied by buildings, asphalt, gravel, turf, and soil surfaces.

ACCESS & CONNECTIVITY

One main driveway entrance from Highway 7, centrally located along the parcel, serves as the primary access point for this park. The boat launch at the foot of the main driveway and the beach serve as primary water access points. There are no formalized paths within the park. Informal footpaths can be seen from Highway 7 into the community centre parking lot, from the upper lot towards the beach, and from the beach to Highway 7, indicating that some park users are arriving on foot.

EXISTING USES

The four dominant park uses include, community recreation in the community centre, membership-based canoe and kayak training from the Orenda Canoe Club, publicly accessible boating from the boat launch, and municipally guarded swimming at the beach. Seasonal events are also accommodated on the grassed area around the community centre.



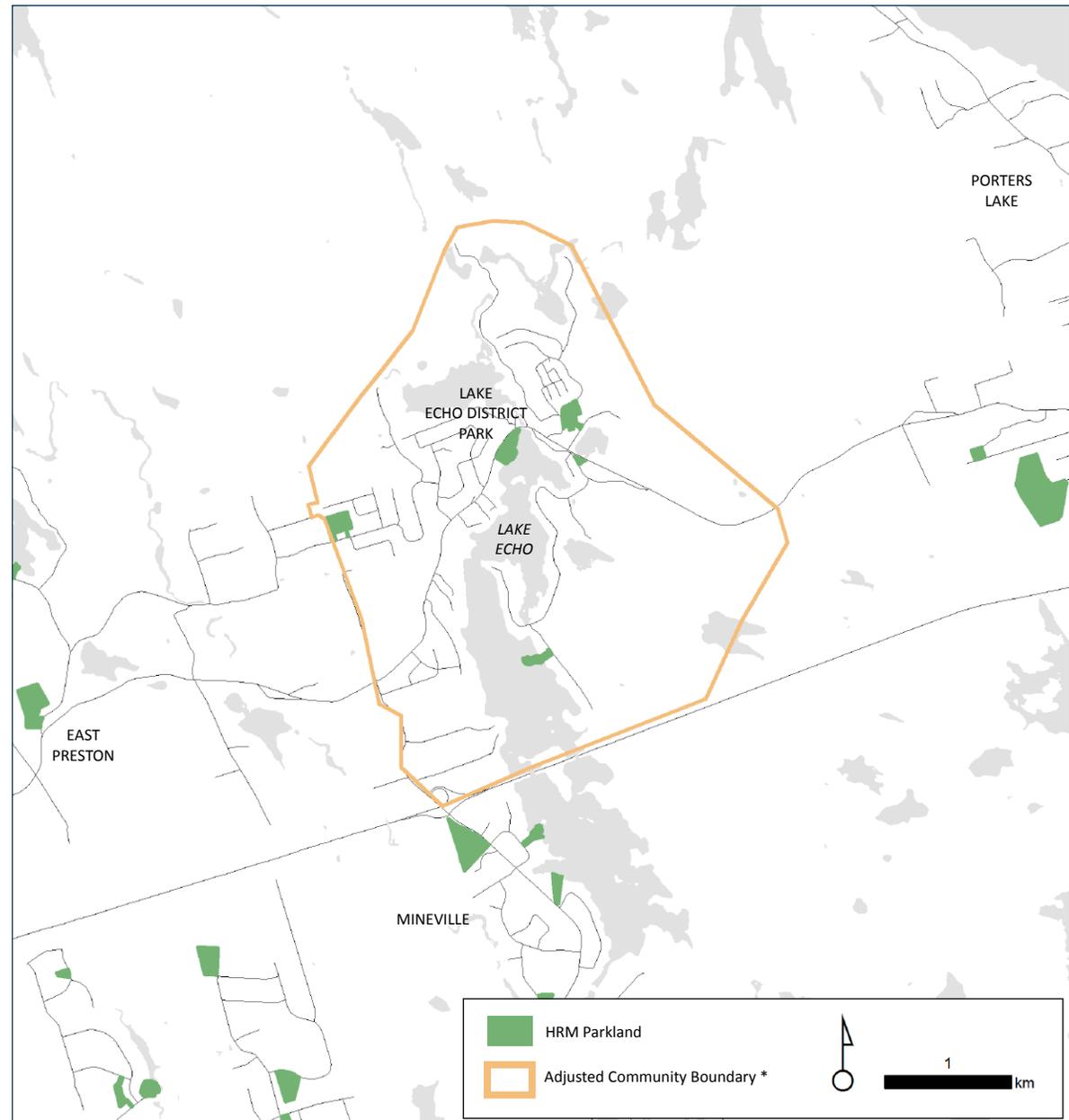
2.3 PARK SERVICE DELIVERY

The park is classified as a District Park. Identified in the Regional Plan, District Parks serve the recreation needs of several communities. A range of recreational uses are typically offered, including, walking and cycling trails, sports fields, picnic areas, supervised beaches, play facilities for children, and areas for passive recreation uses that are left in a predominantly natural state.

Although there are other parks inside the community boundary that offer sport field, ball diamond, and playground amenities, the access to the lake and collocation of the beach with the community centre and Orenda Canoe Club is a unique experience on this site. On this basis, the service-level catchment area for the park represents a larger area than the community boundary.

There is a need to recognize the opportunity in this area for a park enhancement to satisfy the recreation needs of community centre users, beach users, and the summer day-camps for youth at both the community centre and the canoe club. A coordinated park plan will plan for these users and will complement the recreation amenities in adjacent parkland.

*THE NORTHERN LAKE ECHO COMMUNITY BOUNDARY HAS BEEN ADJUSTED TO REFLECT RESIDENTIAL SETTLEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY AND EXCLUDES UNDEVELOPED AND UNINHABITED LAND.



MAP 1: COMMUNITY AND PARK CONTEXT.

2.4 COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Within the Lake Echo community boundary, there are 2,798 residents in 1,184 dwellings. Compared to the HRM mean, there is only one demographic category that is recognizably different (i.e. there are notably lower proportions of 80 year-olds and older) (Table 1). Given the varied demographics, the park should be designed to accommodate a wide range of potential users, with special attention given to planning for youth using the beach, the boat club, and attending day camps; also to the aging community looking for protected (i.e. separated from traffic) and accessible recreation.

TABLE 1: POPULATION ESTIMATES +/- 10% WITHIN 5KM SERVICE AREA.

Age Range	Approx. Percentage	HRM Mean Percentage	Approx. Number in Catchment
0-4 years	5.5	4.9	156
5-9 years	6.0	5.4	169
10-14 years	5.2	5.4	147
15-19 years	5.8	5.8	163
20-29 years	10.4	12.0	296
30-39 years	11.9	12.4	336
40-49 years	15.0	14.2	424
50-59 years	17.6	17.0	498
60-69 years	13.9	12.9	395
70-79 years	5.9	6.7	166
80 Plus	1.7*	3.2	48

Stats Can 2016

**Notably different than HRM mean*

2.5 MUNICIPAL PLANS AND GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Park planning direction has also been drawn from previously completed and forthcoming functional plans and strategies (Table 2). The table below outlines actions from the HRM

Washroom and Drinking Fountain Strategy, the Green Network Plan, and the Municipal Planning Strategy. These documents provide guidance in the development of the park plan.

TABLE 2: MUNICIPAL DIRECTIONAL DOCUMENTS TO INFORM PARK ACTIONS.

Document	Date	Direction
Municipal Planning Strategy Planning Districts 8 & 9 (Lake Echo/Porters Lake)	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It shall be the intention of Council to continue to acquire public lands or cash-in-lieu for public purposes, as provided for by Section 91 of the Planning Act. In this regard, the acquisition of land shall be governed by the guidelines approved for this purpose. In addition to these guidelines, it shall be the intention of Council to encourage the acquisition of lands which provide swimming areas and public access to lake shores and swimming areas, and buffer areas between parkland and adjacent residential areas. p.34 It shall be the intention of Council in conjunction with local recreation groups, to improve the maintenance of and further develop existing public parklands. p.36 It shall be the intention of Council to encourage the formulation of a Recreation Master Plan for Lake Echo. The plan shall specifically provide for the recreation needs of young people, senior citizens and handicapped persons and priority shall be given to the development of a playground adjacent to the Lake Echo Recreation Centre and recreation facilities off Mineville Road south of Highway 107 including a playing field, ball field, playground and tennis courts. Council shall also ensure that any area tax rate for recreation purposes in Lake Echo apply only to property owners within the Lake Echo Community Designation. p.37
Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessment 3188 Highway No. 7	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of petroleum-based soil contamination observed in a phase I assessment warranted further soil testing in the upper lot area formerly occupied by a gas and service station. Most soil and water tests returned with pollutant levels within acceptable levels. Petroleum hydrocarbons were detected near the footprint of the former service station, however. no further risk assessment work was recommended other than periodic monitoring. Surface contaminants were removed during building demolition.
Green Network Plan	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 12 - Work with Halifax Water and Nova Scotia Environment to promote green infrastructure, such as naturalized stormwater retention ponds and bioswales, as the preferred approach to managing stormwater. Action 25 - Consider community gardens, fruit trees, and food supportive amenities, when preparing master plans for public open spaces. Action 44 - Incorporate year-round recreational infrastructure, including winter-oriented activities, when planning parks. Action 45 - Enhance existing standards for the design of parks with a focus on versatile and flexible space, based on the nature of different park types and situations, that encourages participation of all ages and abilities. Action 46 - Include culture and education programs and projects, such as the inclusion of public art within parks and nature interpretation programs when planning for parks. Action 47 - Ensure there is a clear and consistent communication system related to accessibility and wayfinding to and within parks. Action 48 - Enhance social gathering in municipal open spaces by encouraging limited private and not for profit commercial initiatives. Action 76 - Identify, preserve and celebrate cultural landscapes and resources when preparing master plans for publicly-owned open spaces.
Long Term Aquatic Strategy	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a subset of the CFMP2, the Long- Term Aquatic Strategy recognizes the Lake Echo beach as an important natural asset and facility for aquatic service delivery.
HRM Washroom & Drinking Fountain Strategy (forthcoming)	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lake Echo Community Centre is identified as an existing facility adjacent to a park, that with some coordination, could offer better washroom access to the public. In particular, wayfinding and coordinating the opening hours of both the park and the LECC.

2.6 SITE ANALYSIS



FIGURE 4: LAKE ECHO DISTRICT PARK INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS.

3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3.1 VALUES GATHERING

On September 29, 2018, Parks and Recreation staff hosted a pop-up engagement at the Lake Echo Community Centre as part of the Lion's Club 'Boil and Blast' event. On October 15, 2018, Parks and Recreation staff hosted a public workshop at the Lake Echo Community Centre. The purpose of these events was to identify park issues and opportunities. Comments were also accepted via phone and email from September 29 – December 1, 2018.

Over 70 responses were gathered with an emphasis placed on improving:

- **Water access**, safer boat launch, beach improvements, aquatic weed removal;
- **Driveway and Parking**, safer driveway entrance, separation between cars and people, more parking, parking enforcement;
- **Pedestrian circulation**, paved paths between LECC, Orenda, and beach, and to connect to adjacent waterfront property;
- **Access to facilities**, washrooms and running water;
- **Play opportunities**, beach-side playground, climbing feature, all ages and abilities;
- **Social space**, shelter, seating, electrical hook-up, views to the lake;
- **Site safety**, lighting, sight lines, surveillance;
- **Community partnerships**, community garden, public art, signage;
- **Beautification**, tree planting, gardens, highway buffer; and
- **Maintenance**, garbage collection, updated surfaces, improved drainage.

3.2 PRESENTATION OF IDEAS

As a follow-up to the fall 2018 sessions, an open house was hosted on March 19, 2019 to unveil a conceptual park design that was informed by previously gathered public comments. Additional opportunities for online engagement ran from March 19 - May 1, 2019.

Public comments focused on 9 different park program areas, with the following as noted:

- **Boat launch**, residents involved in the boating community were disappointed to see the boat launch removed from the park. They further stressed the need for reestablished water access elsewhere in the park or through the purchase of an adjacent property.;
- **Path Network**, residents were supportive of walking paths within the park. Additional paths within wooded areas and along the Highway 7 bridge were requested;
- **Playground**, there was general support for a new play opportunities. Ideas include climbing and creative play options;
- **Beach**, the community maintains that aquatic weed removal is a priority. Other ideas to enhance the beach include, finer beach sand, a floating dock to launch small boats, fire pits;
- **Driveway/parking**, comments from the public mirrored earlier comments to increase parking capacity, and improve driveway surfaces, widths, and circulation;
- **Washrooms**, LECC board members questioned the logistics and legalities of opening the LECC to the public for washroom access;
- **Site safety**, residents further stressed their displeasure with vandalism in the community. They fear that damage will be done to

the park. Lighting is requested to improve visibility;

- **Canada Post**, residents had questions about the best way to access the mailbox. The road sightlines are poor and would like the driveway or the mailboxes moved to a safer location;
- **Public art**, residents like the idea of commemorating community members or site history, but are not clear on the process.
- **Active play**, a number of residents described the need for hard surfaces for active play, specifically a basketball net and pickleball courts; and
- **Food gardens**, it was requested that an expansion of the existing community garden be accommodated to produce food for the local food bank.



FIGURE 5: PUBLIC WORKSHOP PRESENTATION, OCTOBER 15, 2018.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

The following table (Table 3) illustrates the translation of park issues into opportunities, and further, into actions. The specific actions have informed the subsequent park plan.

TABLE 3: PARK ACTIONS



Issues	Opportunities	Specific Actions
There are inefficiencies in the way in which the site is organized and this presents challenges to the use of and movement through the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the layout, connections, and compatibility between adjacent recreation facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect facilities with a clearly defined, paved path network (e.g., establish a paved path network that connects the parking lot to the beach and to Orenda. Regrade and pave a path from the beach to the upper lot to make the approach more comfortable).
The lack of publicly accessible washrooms and drinking water prevent the full day use of the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish access to facilities within the park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase out the portable washroom at the beach; and • Update the agreement with the LECC to coordinate washroom and change room access for beach users.
There are well-established community groups and individuals that lack clear direction regarding opportunities for community involvement, stewardship, sponsorship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the development of new community features and enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish, improve, and foster stewardship programs* for the community to lead projects that fit within the park concept (e.g. community garden, public art, park enhancements).
Ad hoc park upgrades over time have overlooked site safety and accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize park facilities along clear and safe access points for people of all abilities in all seasons. • Improve park visibility. • Better organize car traffic while allowing for safe pedestrian movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install park lighting to improve park visibility after-dark.; • Thin trees along Highway 7 and strategically lift canopies to open the line of sight into the park; • Install park identification signage and improve the visibility of the existing REC signage; • Reduce parking on the main driveway shoulder to better separate cars from people; and • Explore moving the Canada Post boxes to the LECC parking lot to eliminate a driveway with poor visibility.

TABLE 3: PARK ACTIONS



Issues	Opportunities	Specific Actions
<p>A balance between stand-alone recreation facilities and activated open space should be improved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the diversity of park uses. • Increase the space available for passive and active recreation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new park space in the upper lot along Highway 7 that accommodates active (e.g. pickleball, multipurpose sport court, lawn area, paved paths) and passive (e.g. lawn, benches) recreation; • Implement an activated social area (e.g. gazebo, seating, playground, event space) at the beach; and • Establish tree canopy in the park as a buffer from Highway 7 and to provide opportunities for shade at the beach.
<p>There are inefficiencies in the way in which the waterfront is organized and this presents challenges to lake access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the aquatic experience in the park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with Nova Scotia Environment on acceptable weed control options in the beach area; • Add finer sand in the beach area for a more comfortable experience; • Create opportunities for beach users to be sheltered from the sun; • Implement a community accessible dock for swimming and non-motorized boating; and • Explore options for off-site boat launch locations that meet minimum standards for launch slope, water depth, and set-backs from other uses.

*STEWARDS AND PARTNERS: IN ADDITION TO MUNICIPAL-LED FUNDING, COMMUNITY GROUPS MAY ALSO BE ENCOURAGED TO ORGANIZE AND FUNDRAISE FOR CERTAIN PROJECTS.

5 PARK PLAN

5.1 DESIGN CONCEPT

In this section, the high-level park design is explained and illustrated through a functional diagram, a concept plan, and five program spaces.

FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM

The park functional diagram (Figure 6, p.12) illustrates the high-level program elements and the relationships between them. This is not a design, but a conceptual layout based on proposed function. At the heart of this functional plan is centralized community space that is well-connected to recreation infrastructure.

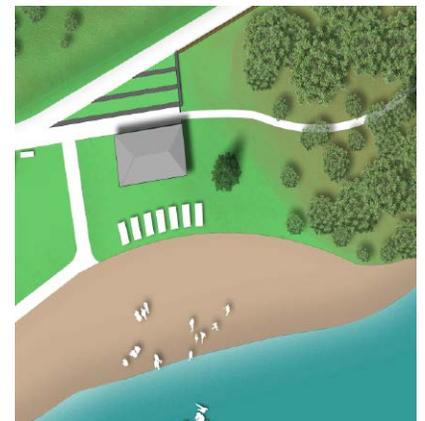
CONCEPT PLAN

The park concept plan (Figure 7, p.13) is a visual summary of site analysis, community consultation, internal parks and recreation review, and best practices. At the heart of this concept is an expanded unscheduled recreation area for both active and passive opportunities, improved path circulation, and enhancements to make the use of the beach more comfortable. Ongoing maintenance issues such as poor drainage and inaccessible path surfaces will be corrected.

PROGRAM SPACES

To highlight in detail the specific areas of the park concept, five program areas have been identified, described, and illustrated (Figures 8-12, p. 14-18):

1. Lake Echo Community Centre (LECC)
2. LECC Connector Pathway
3. Park Entrance and Driveway
4. Waterfront Enhancement
5. Upper Park Enhancement



5.2 FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM

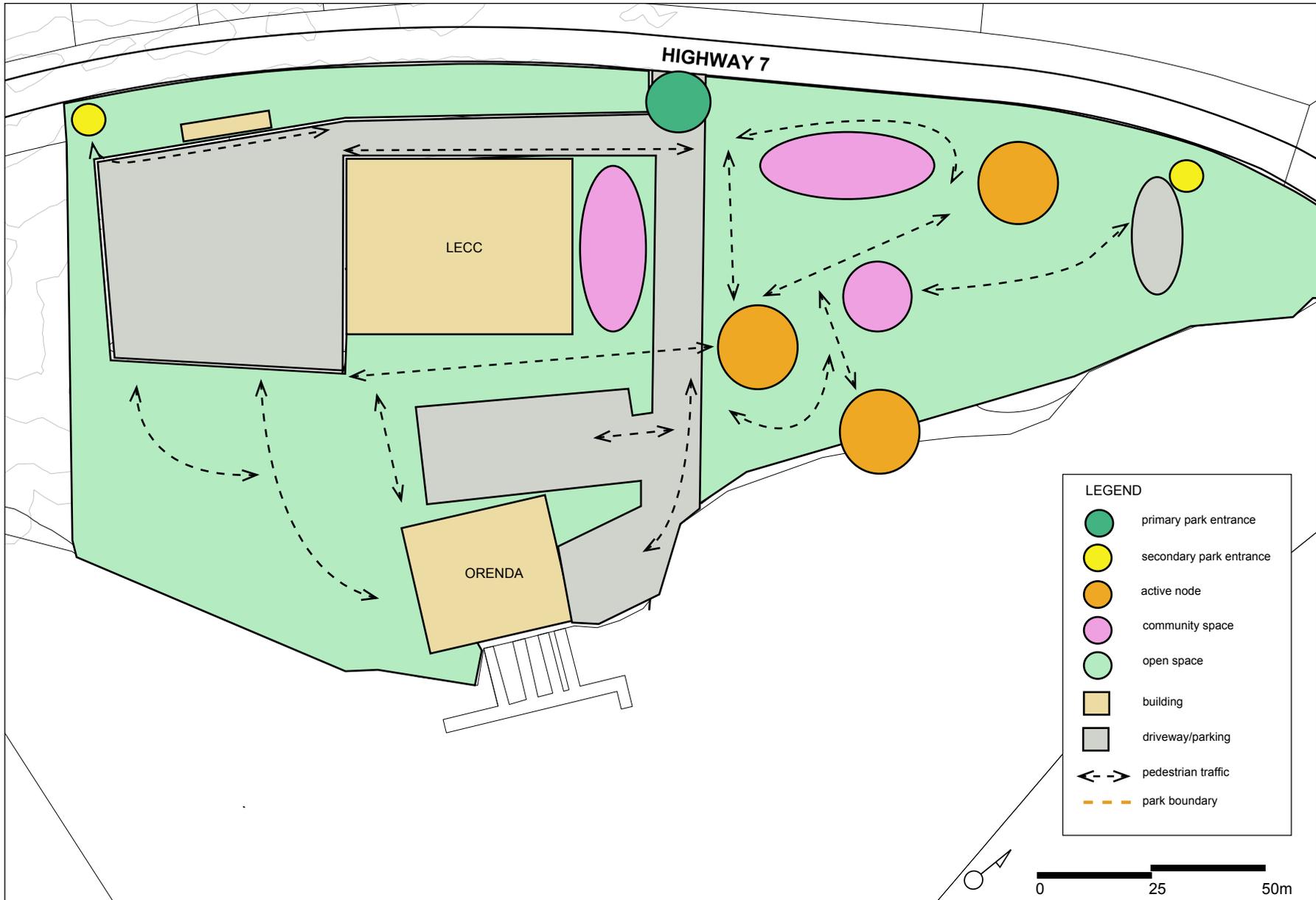


FIGURE 6: LAKE ECHO DISTRICT PARK FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM.

5.3 CONCEPT PLAN



FIGURE 7: LAKE ECHO DISTRICT PARK CONCEPT PLAN.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

LAKE ECHO COMMUNITY CENTRE

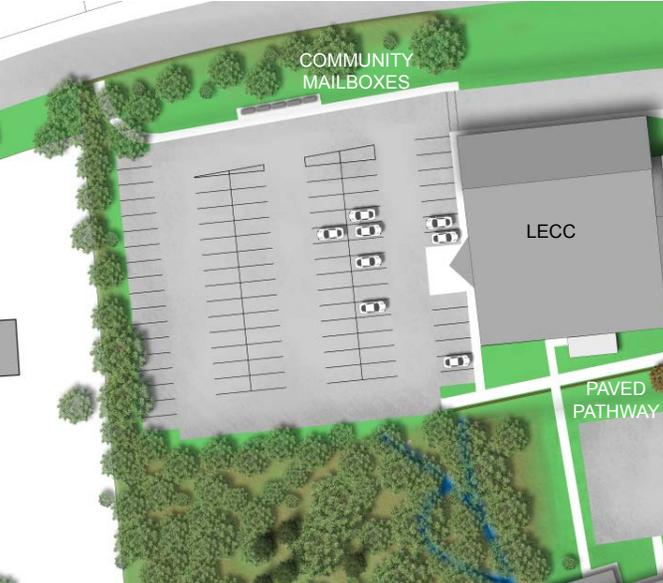


FIGURE 8: LAKE ECHO COMMUNITY CENTRE PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing LECC parking lot has several pinch-points where the parking driveway width is insufficient for safe traffic circulation and for emergency access. A worn foot path from Highway 7 into the parking area indicates that people are walking to the property along the highway shoulder. Between the parking lot and the beach, people walk along the lawn area to the east of the LECC. Currently the forested area between Orenda and the LECC is a stormwater discharged area connected to the provincial ditch on Highway 7. Standing water and erosion is an issue along the outflow to Lake Echo. The forested area also accommodates a number of footpaths between the LECC parking lot and

Orenda Canoe Club. A designated smoking area (DSA) was recently installed along the wooded side of the LECC parking lot.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

To open the upper lot for expanded greenspace, it is proposed that staff work with Canada Post to evaluate the possibility of moving the mail boxes to the LECC parking lot and take advantage of a single point of entry to the property. To improve safety and circulation for vehicles, the parking lot driveway should be widened throughout the parking area. A detailed design for the parking area should include an extended drainage culvert, a relocated designated smoking area (DSA) shelter, and a relocated community centre

garbage bin. A formalized path from Highway 7 along the western side of the parking area would create a safe entry point for pedestrians. To better connect the beach to the LECC parking area, it is envisioned that a new trail would begin on the eastern side of the LECC at the parking lot.

It is proposed that staff work closely with the LECC board to ensure that changes would be complimentary to uses within the centre.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

PARK ENTRANCE AND DRIVEWAY

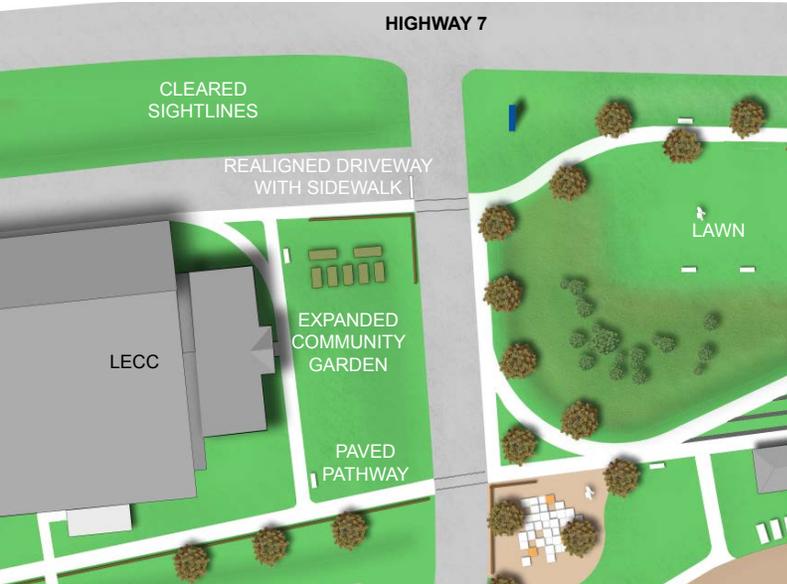


FIGURE 9: MAIN ENTRANCE AND DRIVEWAY PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

During the summer months, the tree line along Highway 7 obscures the entrance to the LECC and park. Generally, the property slopes from the east to west and the main driveway follows this gradient. Currently, the driveway is paved and has a gravel shoulder. Parking is a common occurrence along the northern driveway shoulder despite a number of parking spaces at the LECC. Boulders have been added to the south side of the driveway as a barrier for the LECC lawn.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

It is proposed that trees along Highway 7 be thinned to improve sightlines to the driveway entrance. By realigning the LECC and Orenda

driveways to meet at 90 degrees, traffic flow is made safer and it provides an opportunity for pedestrian access across the driveway to the upper lot. It is proposed that staff work with the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal on the possibility of changes to path and driveway approaches at Highway 7. The proposed upgrades to the driveway itself include a curb and gutter to better direct stormwater, contain loose surface materials, and control parking on the road shoulder. Requests from the community for an expanded community garden indicate the need for an area that allows for garden expansion. Illustrated in the concept is a new garden area on the north side of the LECC at the park entrance. It is recommended that staff explore

options for making the existing REC sign more visible (e.g. raise the elevation on its existing footprint, relocate to a higher elevation, among other solutions).

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

LECC CONNECTOR PATHWAY



FIGURE 10: LECC CONNECTOR PATHWAY PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently, there is no accessible way for people to connect to the park property from the LECC parking lot. Movement is along the lawn between the east side of the LECC and a steep slope.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

A paved pathway connection is proposed to start at the LECC parking lot and connect directly to the beach before continuing to the upper lot at Highway 7. A paved path network that is separated from car traffic would allow park users to safely recreate on the property.

Some slope stabilization or wall development might be necessary along the shared Orenda

slope. A wooden bollard or post and rail would be a helpful barrier between foot traffic and the drainage area.

Access to Orenda from the LECC pathway is optional, but would improve connection between facilities. The introduction of paved accessible parking in the shared LECC/Orenda parking lot would allow for easy access to the beach.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

WATERFRONT ENHANCEMENT



FIGURE 11: WATERFRONT ENHANCEMENT PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are several impediments to the enjoyable use of the beach (e.g. aquatic vegetation, lack of seating and shelter, and aggregate that is too large for the beach surface). Currently, if beach users want to use the washroom they rely on a portable washroom that is brought to the site each season. Storage for programmed beach activities is accommodated in a shipping container at the beach. There is an informal path across the beach area and through to Highway 7, but the surface is soil and is not easily accessed in wet weather. The steep slope between the upper lot and the beach is a barrier to access and use. Those arriving by car to go to the beach park on the road shoulder in front of the beach access points.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

Improved accessibility is central to the enhanced beach area. A paved path connects the LECC parking lot to the beach and to the upper lot. Along this sloping path, seating walls are proposed to be built into the slope as park seating and as a gathering space. A gazebo is proposed at the base of the hill overlooking the beach area. Staff will work with the Lake Echo Lion's Club who are planning a community gazebo for the park. Incorporating electrical connections and lighting will allow this shelter to also double as community event space. There is an opportunity for a small beachside playground with unique play opportunities not already offered in the community. This play space could also double as public art or interpretation of site history (e.g. forestry or

quarry history). Proposed upgrades to the beach itself include the removal of aquatic weeds, the addition of finer sand, and seating. All upgrades are to be planned in accordance with Nova Scotia Environment policy and approval. Although outside of the scope of this project, future trail connections may be evaluated along the head of the lake, but would be subject to Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal policy and approval processes. Following the recommendations of the forthcoming Washroom and Drinking Fountain Strategy, staff will explore an updated agreement with the LECC to coordinate washroom and change room access within the LECC for beach users.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

UPPER PARK ENHANCEMENT



FIGURE 12: UPPER PARK ENHANCEMENT PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently, the upper lot does not function as park space, but a left-over space that sometimes houses informal yard sales and parking. The Canada Post boxes for the community are housed on the most northern part of the upper lot and fencing along Highway 7 defines vehicular access. Formerly a service station, the lot is a collection of remnant surfaces including asphalt, turf, and gravel. Over time, trees along the edges of the former service station lot have grown to obscure the view to the water. The slope to the beach from the upper lot is steep and is a barrier for movement.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

The proposed conditions for the upper lot are characterized by a paved walking loop with a

central lawn. The community has requested the addition of sport courts and multipurpose play areas. Illustrated are two pickleball courts, but this could also be modified to be one pickleball court and one multipurpose sports court. The lawn area is designed to remain open for community use with benches overlooking the water. A raised berm with tree planting is proposed along Highway 7 to create a barrier between highway traffic and park users. It is proposed that staff work with Halifax Transit to create an improved bus stop landing that is connected into the path network. The naturalized east facing slope should remain with some tree thinning to open the view to the lake.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 TIMELINE

Major project milestones are highlighted in the anticipated project schedule (Table 4). Without confirmed project capital, detailed design development and implementation timelines are only estimates.

TABLE 4: PARK PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT SCHEDULE

Milestone	Date
Site inventory and assessment	Summer 2018
Information gathering (public workshop and pop-up)	Fall 2018
Conceptual design development	Fall 2018, Winter 2019
Presentation of plans and ideas (public open house)	Winter 2019
Conceptual design refinement	Spring 2019
Presentation of revised concept (online engagement)	Spring 2019
Presentation to Regional Council	Fall 2019
Detailed design development	2021/22
Implementation	2022 and beyond

6.2 PROJECT PHASING

Project phasing (Figure 13) would allow the development of the park in stages over multiple budget years. Three phases are described, but can be reevaluated if an opportunity for park enhancement presents itself (e.g. external funding, community-led projects) or if the phases are later than proposed based on other capital priorities.

PHASE 1: UPPER PARK DEVELOPMENT, DRIVEWAY REALIGNMENT, CANADA POST BOX RELOCATION

Implementation of phase one allows much of the property to function as normal with short-term disturbance as the driveway realignment occurs. In this phase, the Canada Post boxes may be moved to the parking lot to accommodate the upper lot to be developed into new park space (e.g. trail, lawn, sport courts, planted buffer). The paved path from the upper lot to the beach, seating walls and gazebo would be installed in the same phase.

PHASE 2: BEACH ENHANCEMENT

Timed to minimize the disturbance to the summer season, phase two would see upgrades to the beach area (e.g. playground, new sand, aquatic weed removal, public dock). Access to the beach via paved paths would be implemented in this phase. Accessible parking via the shared LECC/Orenda parking lot should be considered in this phase.

PHASE 3: PARKING LOT UPGRADE

Phase three includes the widening of the parking lot travel lanes to allow for safe vehicular circulation. Depending on the overall condition of the parking lot at the time of this phase, a new lift of asphalt over the entire surface may be warranted. The relocation of the designated smoking area (DSA) and garbage bin, and the extension of the drainage culvert would be coordinated in this phase.

6.3 PROJECT COSTS

There are no immediate financial implications to the recommendations in this report. Future capital expenditures would be considered in subsequent capital years during the business planning process.

There is also the opportunity for the community be involved with fundraising for the coordination of park enhancements (e.g. community garden, public art, beach gazebo, tree and bench donations).

6.4 PHASING DIAGRAM



FIGURE 13: POTENTIAL PARK PHASING DIAGRAM.