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Item No. 15.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
December 3, 2019

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 15, 2019

SUBJECT: Gorsebrook Park – Park Plan

ORIGIN

2018/19 Parks and Recreation Budget and Business Plan.

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 adopt the Gorsebrook Park Planning Report as a guiding document for future improvements to Gorsebrook Park.

BACKGROUND

Gorsebrook Park occupies 7.6 Ha (19 acres) in the South End of Halifax (Attachment A). The major features of the park include:

- Two schools (Inglis Street Elementary and Gorsebrook Junior High Schools);
- A treed park perimeter;
- Gravel and asphalt walkways;
- An accessible playground adjacent to the Inglis Street Elementary School;
- An outdoor ball hockey/box lacrosse court;
- Two ball diamonds;
- A sports field;
- A community garden;
- Three tennis courts;
- A basketball court;
- Two large berm formations that offer views into the park and seasonal sledding opportunities;
- Park frontage and access along Robie and Inglis Streets with secondary pedestrian access from Wellington Street; and
- Lundys Lane, a street that operates as a park entrance and public parking.

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

Since its establishment in the 1940s, on what was formerly a golf course, the park has had little in the way of comprehensive planning despite pressures from new development and increased population in the area. In 2015, area residents and the local councilor met with an interest of identifying issues and possible improvements to the park. Subsequently, Regional Council directed that a park plan be prepared through the adoption of the 2018/19 Parks and Recreation Business Plan.

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 for Gorsebrook Park, which has a variety of uses, in what is 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. Using the results of the 2015 public meeting as a base for the initial park concept, there were two opportunities for the community to engage in the park planning process:

- Open House – December 10, 2018
  An open house was hosted to unveil preliminary conceptual park plans that were informed by previously gathered public comments from 2015. The public was invited to review the preliminary plans and to provide feedback for staff and other residents to review. Residents were generally supportive of the proposed concept, but further stressed the need to retain parking on Lundy's Lane, to install public washrooms, and to retain unobstructed sledding on St. Francis Hill, among other details related to paved paths, lighting, and consideration to existing sport groups. Comments were also accepted via phone and email from December 10, 2018 to January 11, 2019.

- Online Engagement – April 8 – May 1, 2019
  As a follow-up to the December 10th open house, the preliminary conceptual park plans were modified based on public feedback and posted on the park planning webpage for public review. Overall, community members were pleased with the proposed conceptual plans and used the online engagement to reinforce the feedback given at the December 10 session. Many of the comments that were stressed (e.g. lighting, seating, tree locations, signage, parking, and maintenance) are elements that would be refined during the detailed design phase. Sporting groups (e.g. Halifax Minor Baseball, Nova Scotia Cricket Association) are supportive of the proposed upgrades and enhancements. In should be noted that some residents are not supportive of paved paths or the rearranging of tennis courts for fear of an increase in park users and the resulting noise and parking issues that they believe would follow. However, these changes are not viewed as establishing undue issues or conflicts to what would normally be expected within the park.

Findings

From the assessments, several key findings emerged, including:

- 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;
- A balance between scheduled and unscheduled areas should be improved;
- The lack of publicly accessible washrooms and drinking water prevent the use of the park as a destination;
- There are well-established community landmarks (e.g. sledding hill, community garden) that are working well and should not be changed; and
- Ad hoc park upgrades over time have overlooked site safety and accessibility.

Park Plan Highlights

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

1. Inglis Street entrance
   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. During detailed design development, staff can explore if a relocated road crossing to St. Mary's University is feasible. 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, contain the play space, and 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, and the existing boulders relocated to the playground as a play feature.

2. Central gathering and amenity space
   To create more versatile space, a central 'great lawn' for unscheduled activity ringed by a paved walking-loop with lighting and seating is envisioned. An enhancement of the existing Gorsebrook ball diamond could accommodate the removal of the St. Francis diamond without a loss of scheduled hours. However, this should not occur until need for the ball diamond is confirmed through reviews such as the municipality's upcoming Playing Field Strategy. When the tennis courts require upgrading, they could be moved to the northern fence line to provide room for the great lawn. No obstructions are proposed that would interfere with sledding on St. Francis Hill. As a precaution, grading would be required along the western tennis court edge to redirect oncoming sledders.

   A play area and gathering space between the great lawn and tennis courts could be phased-in over time. This area could offer non-traditional play equipment that is not offered in the existing playground such as climbing boulders, hammocks, and outdoor ping-pong.

In line with a forthcoming park Washroom Strategy, a centralized pavilion with washrooms and a shaded seating area is proposed between the playground and great lawn. The pavilion is proposed to be a gathering and event space with power connections. There is the potential to re-establish small-scale water play within the park. An area for recreation storage will reduce the reliance on outdoor seasonal storage (e.g. fenced cage, shipping containers).

3. Robie Street entrance
   It is proposed that a more formal park entrance be established with a relocated park sign, opportunities for seating, and lighting for increased park visibility from Robie Street. Coordinated gateway design and materials are 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 the 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.

4. Wellington Street entrance
   Based on community requests to not remove all parking on Lundys Lane, the concept for this area 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. 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 could prevent cars from driving into the park. A formal park gateway is proposed along the Wellington Street entrance with park signage, lighting, and seating. During the detailed design phase, the concept for Lundys Lane will require collaboration with Transportation & Public Works as this is a road parcel and not parkland.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Currently, Gorsebrook 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 four defined program areas has been developed. The approval of the park plan will set a guiding document for future upgrades. A phased approach to implementation would be considered 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.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications to the recommendations in this report. 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. Given the scope of work proposed, a number of implementation phases are proposed that would require further evaluation into their feasibility, detailed design, and detailed cost estimates. It is estimated that the total value of the proposed work would be within a order of magnitude of $3.0M in 2020 dollars. The possible future capital expenditures would be considered when components require repairs and as opportunities for park improvements arise. In subsequent capital budgets during the business planning process, projects will be prioritized against other capital requests as opportunities and capacity allow.

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 October 29, 2015 and December 10, 2018; and online engagement was held from December 10, 2018 – January 11, 2019, and April 8 – May 1, 2019.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There no specific environmental implications that have been identified with the content of this report.

ALTERNATIVES

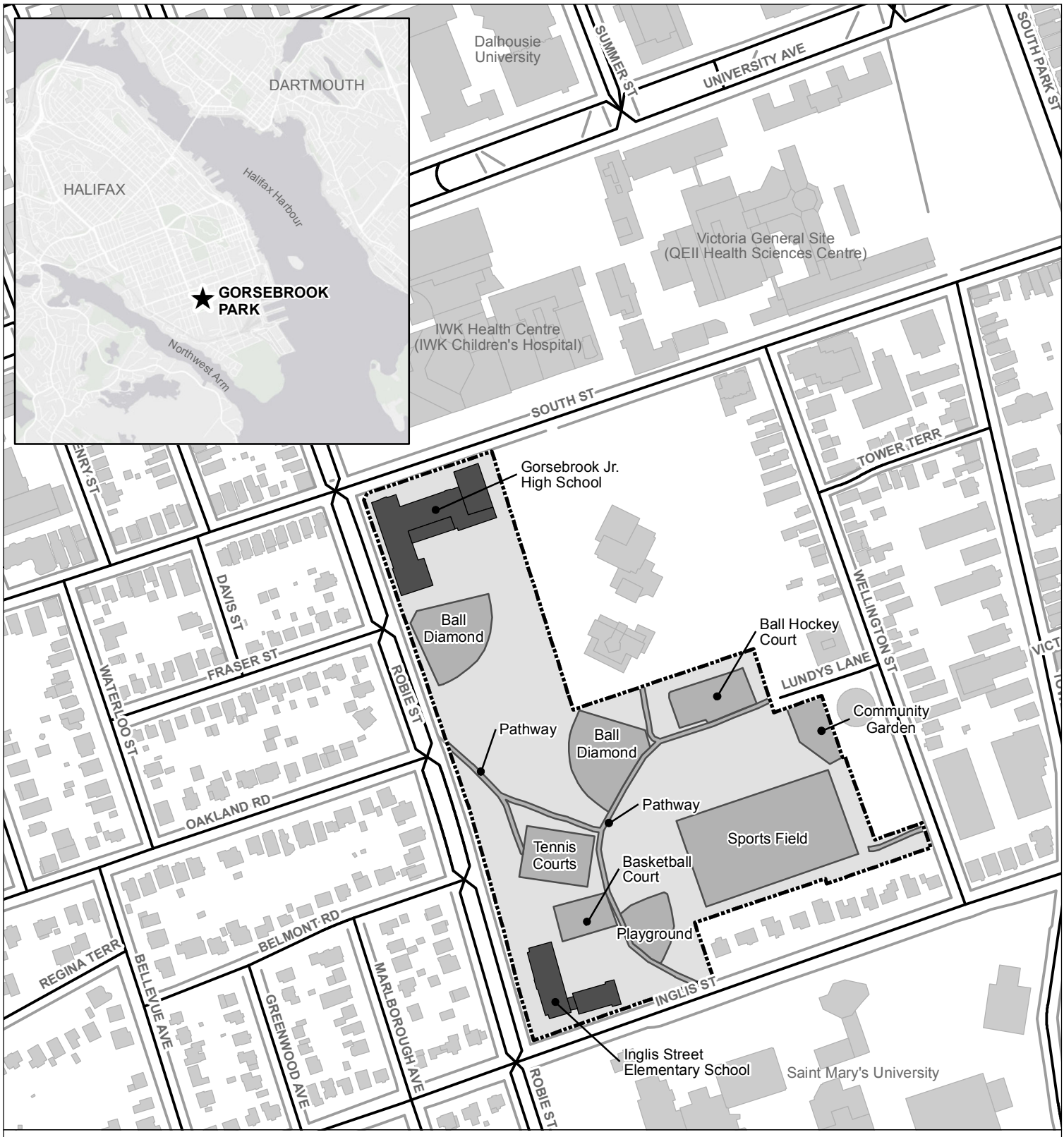
1. Regional Council could choose to approve or request changes to the park plans as presented. This may require additional review, possible community consultation, and a separate staff report.
2. Regional Council could choose not to approve the proposed park plan. This is not recommended based upon the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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Gorsebrook Park Location Map
Attachment B – Gorsebrook 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



GORSEBROOK PARK - LOCATION MAP

- Gorsebrook Park Boundary
- School Building
- Park Recreation Feature
- Other Building
- Road/Vehicle Access
- Pedestrian Travel (Sidewalk, Trail, Walkway)

HALIFAX

Parks & Recreation
Policy & Planning

0 25 50 100 150
Distance in Metres

PR-2019-24-01 14/06/2019

ATTACHMENT B

HALIFAX

GORSEBROOK PARK

PARK PLANNING REPORT

NOVEMBER 2019



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Gorsebrook Park is located in the South End of Halifax. Since its establishment in the 1940s, on what was formerly a golf course, it has had little in the way of comprehensive planning. In 2015, area residents and the local Councillor met with an interest of identifying issues and possible improvements to the park. Subsequently, Regional Council directed that a park plan be prepared through the adoption of the 2018/19 Parks and Recreation Business Plan.

Building on the work that was done by residents, the following factors 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, in addition to the initial 2015 meeting, the public was engaged to consider the analysis that was undertaken and review preliminary park plans though a meeting in December 2018 and further online engagement. Other stakeholders, including sport groups and clubs, a residents' association, community gardening society and adjacent schools were also contacted.

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 challenges the use of and movement through the park;
- A balance between scheduled and unscheduled areas should be improved;
- The lack of publicly accessible washrooms and drinking water prevent the use of the park as a destination;
- There are well-established community landmarks (e.g. sledding hill, community garden) that are working well and should not be changed; and
- Ad hoc park upgrades over time have overlooked site safety and accessibility.

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 a large open area that is conceived of as 'great lawn', which is designed for general community recreation use as other areas may be being used for scheduled play. It is suitable for pick-up sport, picnicking, or events. Around this, 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.

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

Gorsebrook Park is located in the South End of Halifax. Since its establishment in the 1940s, on what was formerly a golf course, it has had little in the way of comprehensive planning. In 2015, area residents and the local Councillor met with an interest of identifying issues and possible improvements to the park. 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

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 also shifted to favour multifunctionality over exclusive-use by park scheduling. This project responds to the operational and community-derived issues and opportunities that have been collected over the years. 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 balance scheduled and unscheduled activities for both active and passive uses.

At 7.6 ha (19 acres), Gorsebrook Park (Figure 1) is within the south end of the Halifax peninsula between both the Dalhousie and Saint Mary's University campuses, south of the IWK and Nova Scotia Health Authority campuses, and surrounded by single family and multi-unit housing. Set within the park's boundary are two public schools (Inglis Street Elementary, Gorsebrook Junior High) and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) to the immediate north. Gorsebrook Park houses two ball diamonds, a sports field, three tennis courts, a basketball court, a ball hockey/box lacrosse court, an accessible playground, and a community garden.

FIGURE 1: AERIAL VIEW OF GORSEBROOK PARK.

N.T.S.

1.3 SITE HISTORY

The establishment of large estates and land grants was common in the south end of Halifax in the 1800s. In 1824, Enos Collins bought an estate from John Tremaine and named it 'Gorsebrook'. The Gorsebrook homestead was located on Tower Road on what is now the Homburg Centre at Saint Mary's University. The Gorsebrook house was demolished in the 1960s, coincidentally spurring the formation of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia.

The Gorsebrook estate was intersected in 1894 by the extension of Inglis Street as a means to further develop the residential area along the Northwest Arm. The Gorsebrook Golf Club formed on the north side of Inglis Street by the 1900s and by 1928 expanded on the south side of Inglis Street to include 9 more holes. The course remained in operation until the late 1940s.

As part of the divestment of the Collins-owned estate, the Royal Canadian Air Force purchased land during WWII for the establishment of a base in the northeast portion of Gorsebrook. An Air Force residence was built by 1953. By the late 1940s, the former City of Halifax had purchased the remaining lands north of Inglis Street. Early park development included the installation of ball diamonds.

Gorsebrook Park Junior High School and St. Francis School (now Inglis Street Elementary School) were built in 1949 and 1952, respectively. In 1983, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) began operating the Sir Frederick Fraser School.

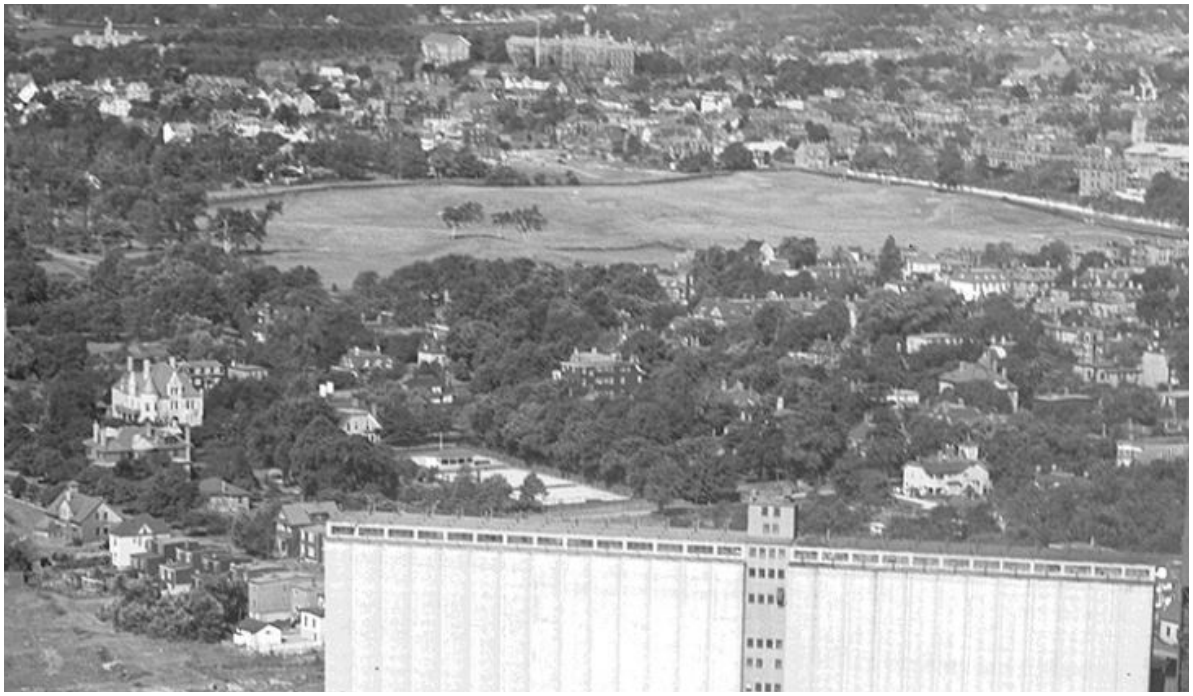


FIGURE 2: GORSEBROOK GOLF COURSE (NOW GORSEBROOK PARK) AERIAL PHOTO AS SEEN FROM HALIFAX HARBOUR, 1931.

FIGURE 3: GORSEBROOK GOLF COURSE LOOKING EAST, TOWARDS THE LARGE CENTRAL BERM, N.D.

FIGURE 4: GORSEBROOK GOLF COURSE, 1940.

1.4 LANDSCAPE CHANGE

FIGURE 5: GORSEBROOK PARK AERIAL PHOTO COLLECTION.

By 1931, the former Gorsebrook Estate was already intersected by Inglis Street (c. 1894) forming a squared boundary of greenspace bounded by Robie Street, South Street, Wellington Street, and Inglis Street. Residential lots along the eastern estate boundary (i.e. Wellington Street) had already extended almost the entire length of the park. The golf course pictured above was established in 1900 and operated until 1948. It is unknown when the ball diamond in the north-eastern corner of the park was established but may have remained until the Royal Canadian Air Force purchased the land during WWII. Other than the treed corner of Inglis and Robie Streets, the park was an open grassed landscape.

By the late 1940s, the former City of Halifax had purchased the Gorsebrook lands north of Inglis Street. Early park development included the installation of ball diamonds. During WWII, more than six hectares of land were subdivided from the northeastern corner of the park by the Royal Canadian Air Force for a base and residence. Gorsebrook Park Junior High School (est. 1949) at Robie and South Streets and St. Francis School (est. 1954) at Robie and Inglis Streets were built. By 1960, the residential development around Gorsebrook Park became noticeably denser with further subdivision of land. Streets were widened, and perimeter trees planted. A network of footpaths can be seen intersecting much of the park.

By the mid-1970s, the St. Francis sports field, St. Francis ball diamond, and Gorsebrook ball diamond were established. A wading pool/splash pad was established to the west of the sports field. By the 1980s, tennis, ball hockey, and a playground were formalized in the same location where they stand today. The path network within the park was limited to informal wear paths. From the 1970s to 1980s, attempts were made to contain parking within Lundys Lane with the addition boulders as a barrier. In 1983, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) began operating the Sir Frederick Fraser School.

The Gorsebrook Park of today looks similar to the park of the 1980s with a few additions, a basketball court to the north of Inglis Street School, new path surfaces in some areas, the decommissioning of the splash pad, and a recent (2018) upgrade to the playground. Community funded tree planting in 2016 added caliper trees to the large central berm. Upgrades to site drainage has improved some of the drainage issues within the park.

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

7.6 ha (19 acres).

TOPOGRAPHY

The park is an undulated parcel with two prominent berm formations. At its highest point at the corner of South and Robie Streets (36 m), the park slopes to the south east where the lowest point (22 m) is near the southern Wellington Street entrance.

VEGETATION

Mown turf is the primary ground cover within the park (e.g. sports field, ball diamonds, hillsides) and accounts for some 70% of the park area that also includes trees. Approximately 30% of the park area is covered in impervious surfaces (e.g. buildings, sport courts, paths, parking). Much of the park perimeter is treed with some areas that have naturalized over time (e.g. along northern edge behind the ball hockey court, southern Wellington Street entrance).

ACCESS & CONNECTIVITY

Four main entrances define the access points to Gorsebrook Park, a mid-block entrance on Robie Street, one on the eastern side of Inglis Street Elementary, one in the southeastern corner on Wellington Street, and an entrance from the end of Lundy's Lane off Wellington Street. A major barrier to park circulation and community connectivity is the provincially-owned land (i.e. APSEA) to the northeast of the park parcel. The crusher dust, gravel, and asphalt path network within the park is uneven and presents a barrier to movement, especially when the soil is wet. The path network is largely defined by site topography. Currently, there is no winter maintenance. There are five bus routes with relatively high frequency that stop on three sides of the park.

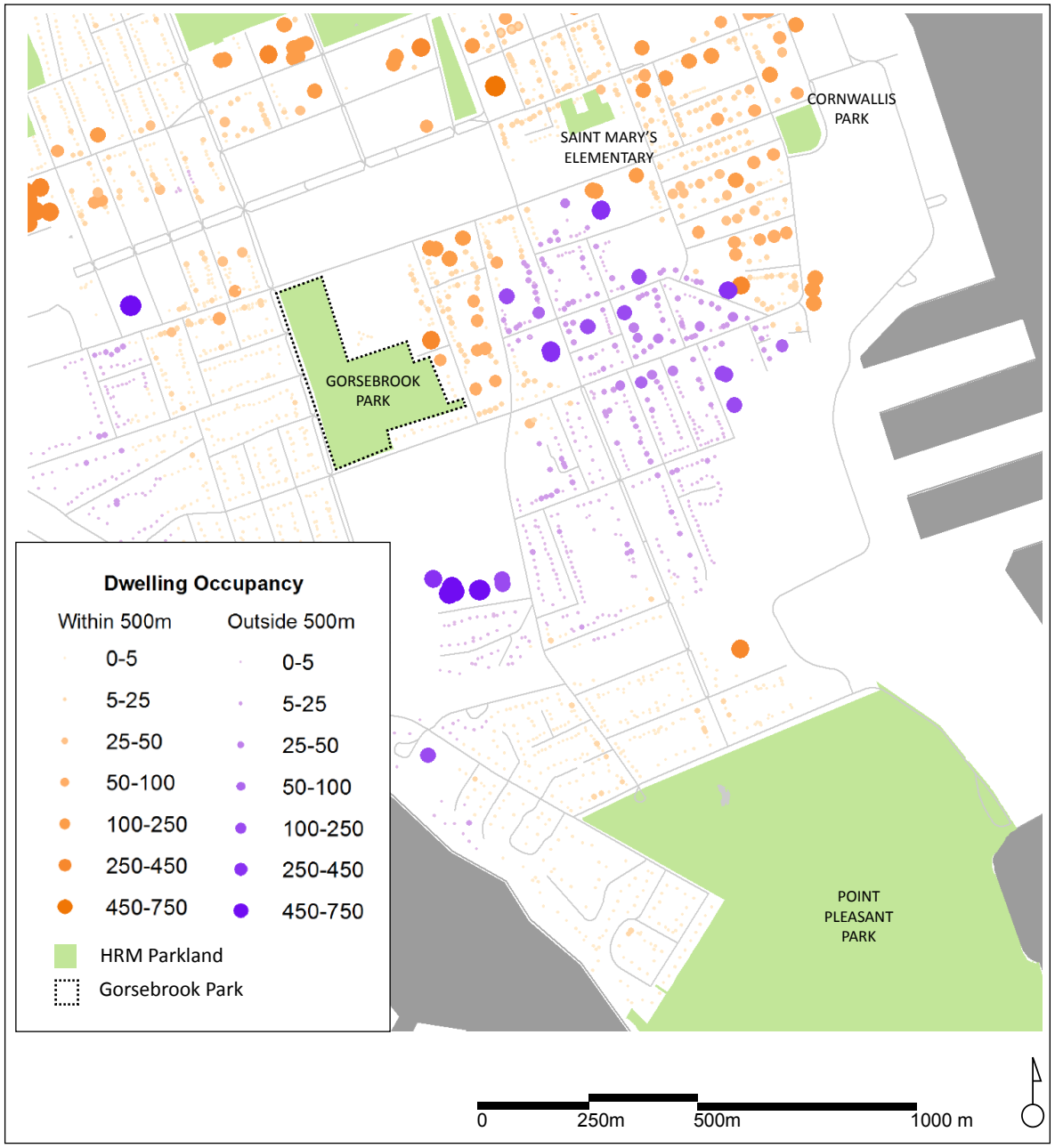
EXISTING USES

Gorsebrook Park primarily supports scheduled field and court sports, with unscheduled use outside of peak hours. Some of the recreation facilities are heavily scheduled including, Gorsebrook ball diamond, ball hockey/box lacrosse court, and the sports field. The community garden is well-maintained by an active community gardening society. Students at the Inglis Street School use the playground during school hours. Both Inglis and Gorsebrook schools use the field and diamonds during shoulder seasons. In the winter months, sledding on St. Francis Hill is the most popular activity.

2.3 PARK SERVICE DELIVERY

The Green Network Plan rationalizes a 500m (6-minute walking distance/2-minute cycle) service level for the Regional Centre. The density in the South End is such where residents have limited amenity area within their own properties for recreation. When looking at the service area and dwellings, it is noted that there are a particularly high number of residents who live further than 500m from a park. The consequence is, without the acquisition or development of new park space, existing parks must serve a high number of users and will continue to do so into the future.

Although Point Pleasant Park is a larger park at the southern end of the peninsula, the recreation facilities found in Gorsebrook Park are largely the only ones south of University Avenue. Therefore, the service-level catchment area for Gorsebrook Park is much larger than 500m and represents a diverse area. As a result, Gorsebrook is a hard-working park and the aging facilities within it are under pressure due to high usage. On this basis, there is a need to recognize the importance of a properly planned park with the development of well-designed facilities.



MAP 1: SERVICE AREA AND DWELLING OCCUPANCY INDICATES A GAP IN SERVICE FOR THE SOUTH END.

2.4 COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Within 500 m of Gorsebrook park there are 9700 people in approximately 900 dwellings. As compared to the HRM mean, there are some notable differences (Table 2):

- lower proportions of 0-4 year-olds;
- higher proportions of 20-29 year olds;
- lower proportions of 30-39 year olds;
- lower proportions of 40-49 year-olds; and
- lower proportions of 50-59 year-olds;

These demographics can partially be attributed to the park's position between south-end universities. However, there is not an immediate need to design the park for this population, as they would have some access to university facilities.

Given the varied demographics, the park should be designed to accommodate a wide range of potential users, with special attention to school-aged children, particularly with the presence of the two schools.

TABLE 2: POPULATION ESTIMATES +/- 10% WITHIN THE 500M SERVICE DELIVERY AREA FOR GORSEBROOK PARK.

Age Range (years)	Approx. Percentage	HRM Mean Percentage	Approx. Number in Catchment
0-4	*2.9	4.9	274
5-9	4.3	5.4	418
10-14	5.1	5.4	495
15-19	8.1	5.8	782
20-29	*30.7	12.0	2957
30-39	*7.4	12.4	712
40-49	*10.4	14.2	1000
50-59	*11.0	17.0	1061
60-69	11.1	12.9	1065
70-79	6.5	6.7	625
80 Plus	3.0	3.2	288

Stats Can 2016

**Notably different than HRM mean*

2.5 FACILITY USAGE

Within Gorsebrook Park, more than half of the most useable areas of the park (i.e. relatively flat area) can be booked by sporting groups or is infrastructure that has a defined use (e.g. playground, basketball, pathways, community garden). Approximately 26% of the unscheduled open space has a slope greater than 5%, which limits useability. This includes steeply sloped grassed areas within the park, which do have some value for seating or exercise, but exceed maximum grade requirements for most recreation facilities. That said, what usually might be considered to be space with limited use (e.g. steep slopes) is the most popular feature of Gorsebrook Park in the winter for sledding.

Approximately 25% of the park area is relatively flat open space that can be used as unscheduled space by the public. However, this space is not uniformly dispersed (i.e. top of berms, strips of grass along path edges, at the end of the sports field) and is not necessarily connected to the existing path network.

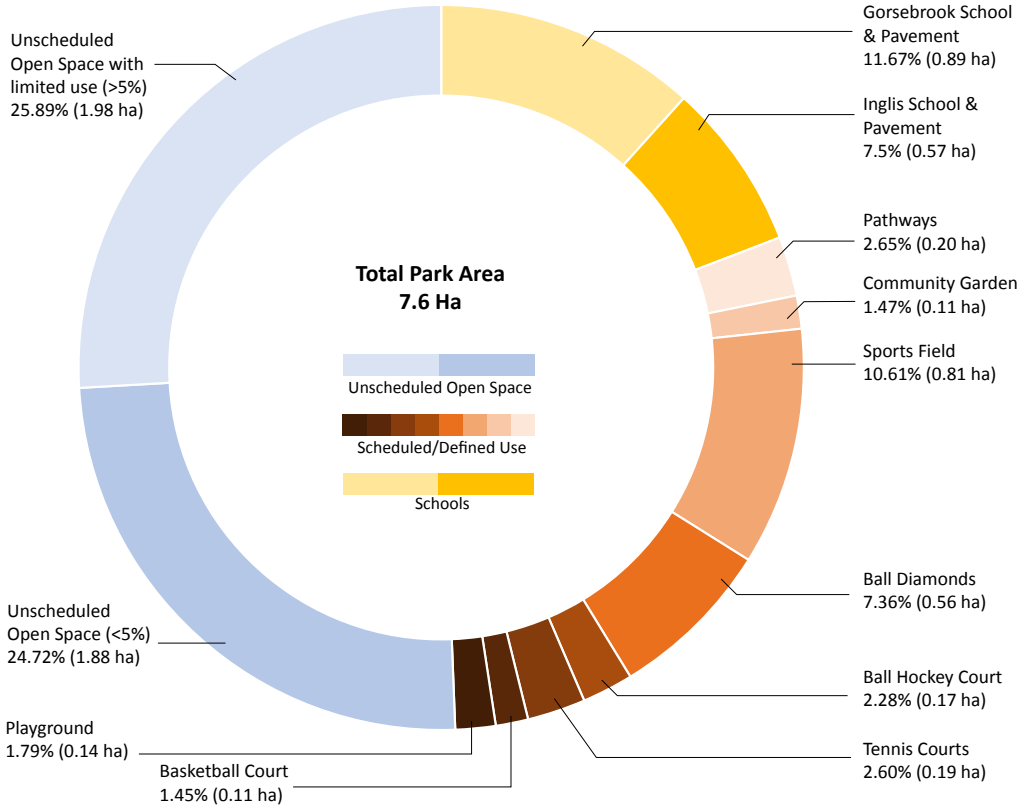


FIGURE 7: ILLUSTRATION OF TOTAL PARK AREA AS DEFINED BY BOTH SCHEDULED AND UNSCHEDULED FACILTIIES AND SPACES.

The facility scheduling data below (Table 3) outlines 2016-2018 booking data for facilities within Gorsebrook Park. This data reveals that,

- The demand for the St. Francis ball diamond has decreased each year. In 2018, the diamond was booked 200 hours less than in 2016;
- Each year, the demand for St. Francis sports field has increased. In 2018, the field was booked 170 hours more than in 2016;
- The ball hockey/lacrosse court remains popular with both 2017 and 2018 seasons seeing an increase in some 100 hours booked, as compared to 2016;
- Tennis court bookings have decreased each year, but park users indicate that hours booked do not reflect the significant unscheduled use of the facility.

Facility cancellations and unscheduled use by the community is not reflected in the data.

TABLE 3: FACILITY USAGE REPORT ORGANIZED BY HOURS BOOKED FROM 2016-2018.

Facility	2016 Hours	2017 Hours	2018 Hours
St. Francis ball diamond	283	230	83
St. Francis cricket pitch	13	0	21
St. Francis sport field	244	297	414
Gorsebrook ball diamond	223	205	193
Gorsebrook hill	6	9	0
Gorsebrook outdoor court	152	288	248
Gorsebrook tennis court 1	320	164	77
Gorsebrook tennis court 2	309	164	77

2.6 MUNICIPAL PLANS AND GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Park planning direction has also been drawn from previously completed and forthcoming functional plans and strategies (Table 4). The table below outlines actions from the Urban Forest Master Plan, HRM Washroom and Drinking Fountain Strategy, and the Green Network Plan. These documents provide guidance in the development of the park plan for Gorsebrook.

TABLE 4: MUNICIPAL DIRECTIONAL DOCUMENTS TO INFORM PARK ACTIONS.

Document	Date	Direction
Urban Forest Master Plan	2013	• Tree canopy in Gorsebrook Park can be increased from approximately 9-20%.
CFMP2	2016	• Accessibility and universal design should be a consideration in facility design. • Safe and accessible pedestrian circulation is an important design consideration. • Walking distance should be considered for the placement of urban park facilities. • To identify need, opportunity, and costs associated with playing field design and management decisions, HRM should develop and implement a playing field strategy. • Enhance tennis courts including (where appropriate) lighted courts and courts sized for progressive tennis. • Many ball diamonds throughout HRM are currently underutilized. There is a need to improve conditions at some of the most popular softball diamonds if they are to remain playable in the short to medium term.
Green Network Plan	2018	• 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 23 - Balanced with other open space uses, support community gardens and other forms of food production in public parks and other Municipally-owned properties. • 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.
HRM Washroom & Drinking Fountain Strategy (forthcoming)	2019	• Gorsebrook Park is identified as a 'high-need park' and should be given priority for a newly built washroom and drinking fountains. A 'dedicated' facility is identified as ideal, this type of washroom has dedicated gender-neutral stalls with a common sink and mirror

2.7 SITE ANALYSIS

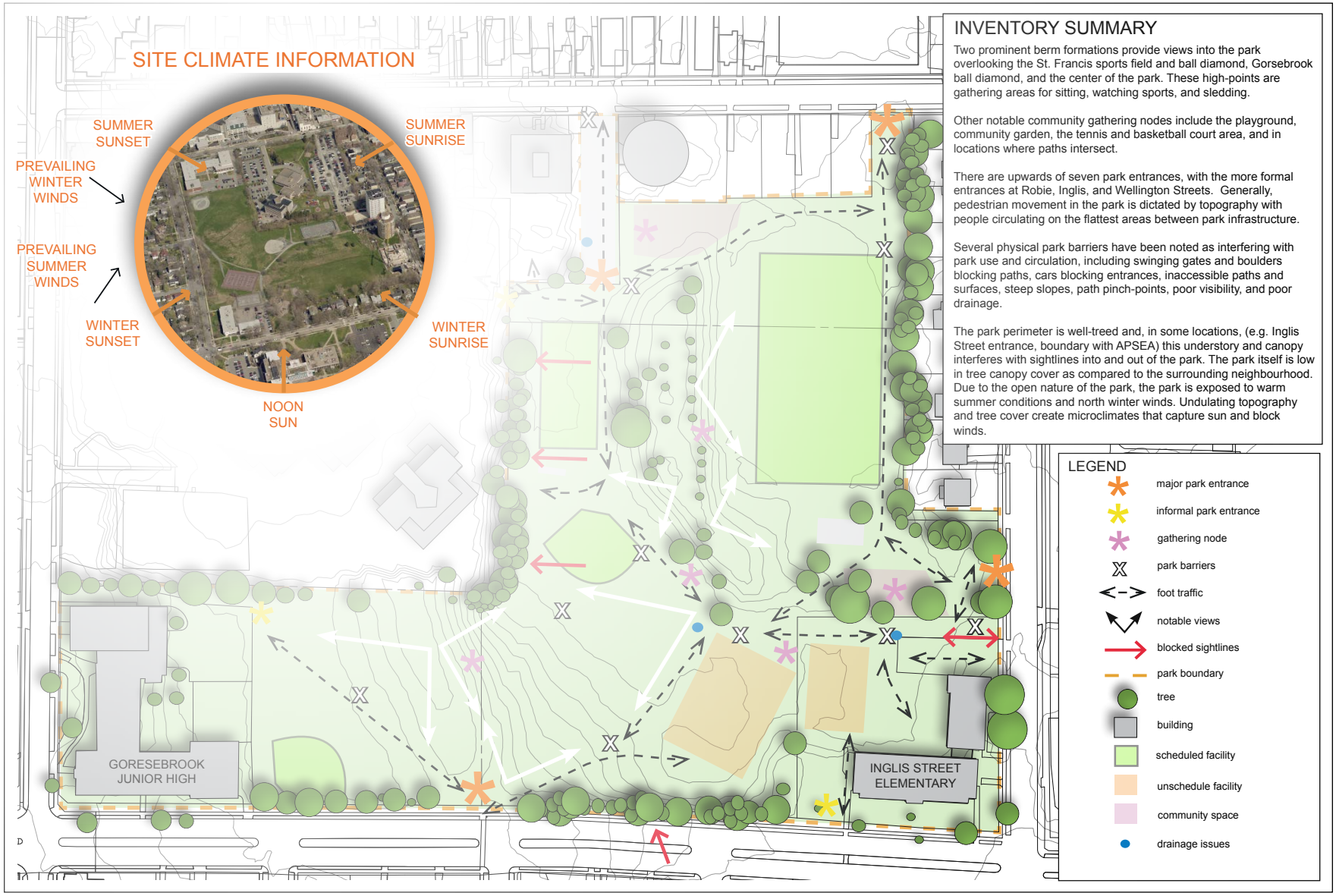


FIGURE 6: GORSEBROOK PARK INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS.

3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3.1 VALUES GATHERING

On October 29, 2015, the local Councillor hosted a public meeting 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. 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; and
- 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. better identified entrances, lighting, wider paths);
- 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).

3.2 PRESENTATION OF IDEAS

As a follow-up to the 2015 public meeting, an open house was hosted on December 10, 2018 to unveil a conceptual park design that was informed by previously gathered public comments. Additional opportunities for online engagement ran from December 10, 2018 – January 11, 209, and April 8 – May 1, 2019.

Public comments focused on 11 different park program areas, with the following as noted:

- Walking paths, residents generally support the idea of a path network, especially if it improves park access, but are cautious of disturbing existing park uses and site drainage. Some residents are opposed to paved paths;
- 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, many residents do not want to see a loss of sport court access and would like to see the addition of pickle-ball courts. Some residents noted the noise from existing courts as being undesirable and do not wish to see the addition of new courts, especially on the northern property line;
- Open space, residents want to ensure that the reorganizing park space does not limit usability. Some residents would like to see new play options (e.g. creative play structures, disc golf). The Nova Scotia Cricket Association is supportive of a great lawn for cricket practices;
- Ball diamonds, Halifax Minor Baseball are generally supportive of a diamond enhancement and diamond closure if accompanied by new fencing along Robie Street and lighting to extend hours of play;
- Community garden, the Peninsula Urban Garden Society is happy with the current provision of garden beds;
- Sledding hill, paths, fencing, lighting, trees, and benches should be organized to avoid safety conflicts;
- Enforcement, the community believes that better enforcement is needed in the park (e.g. dog off-leash, exclusive use of facilities like tennis courts, after hours use); and
- 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).

4 FINDINGS

4.1 KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

The following table (Table 5) illustrates the translation of park issues into opportunities, and further, into actions. The specific actions have informed the subsequent park plan.

TABLE 5: PARK ACTIONS

Issues	Opportunities	Specific Actions
There are inefficiencies in the way in which the site is organized and this challenges the use of and movement through the park.	• Improve the layout, connections, and compatibility between adjacent recreation facilities.	• Relocate and enhance the tennis courts on the northern park boundary (next to the ball hockey court). • Enhance the Gorsebrook Diamond to accommodate an increase in hours (to make up for the potential removal of the St. Francis Diamond). • Connect facilities with a clearly defined, paved path network.
A balance between scheduled and unscheduled areas should be improved.	• Incorporate the addition of accessible unscheduled open space.	• Establish a multifunctional central lawn that is connected via accessible paths that can be used without booking. • Incorporate a covered gathering area to be used for seating or for community events.
The lack of publicly accessible washrooms and drinking water prevent the use of the park as a destination.	• Establish access to facilities within the park.	• Develop a centralized park pavilion with washroom access and a water fountain.
There are well-established community landmarks (e.g. sledding hill, community garden) that are working well and should not be changed.	• Maintain the existing community sledding hill and community garden. • Encourage the development of new community features and enhancement.	• Park enhancements are to respect clearances for existing community uses. • Establish and foster stewardship programs* for the community to lead projects that fit within the park concept (e.g. community garden, public art, park enhancements). • Engage the Inglis Street school on the addition of a naturalized pollinator meadow.

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

TABLE 5: PARK ACTIONS AS DERRIVED FROM ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED).

Issues	Opportunities	Specific Actions
Ad hoc park upgrades over time have overlooked site safety and accessibility.	Organize park facilities along clear and safe access points for people of all abilities in all seasons.	• Enhance entrances at Robie Street and Inglis Street with more visible park signage (with park rules), seating, and lighting. • Establish a paved path network that is maintained during winter months to establish barrier-free access to the park center and to improve access to surrounding neighbourhoods. • Regrade, reoriented, and pave the path from Robie Street to make the approach into the park more comfortable. • Install pathway lighting to improve park visibility after-dark. • Thin trees along property lines and strategically lift canopies to open the line of sight into the park. • Reduce the Lundys Lane parking area to a single row of parking to accommodate a safe stall and driveway width. • Install a driveway turn-around at the end of Lundys Lane to allow for park user and equipment drop-off. • Install traffic barriers (e.g. bollards) to ensure that car traffic within the park is avoided. • Establish a sidewalk into the park from Wellington Street to separate people from cars. Work with TPW on detailed design.

Some public respondents will notice that their suggested comments for the park may not be reflected in specific actions. For example, some residents oppose paved pathways to keep park traffic informal; but from a park accessibility, public recreation, and winter maintenance point of view, it is beneficial to introduce a paved path network. Another example is the opposition to tennis and pickleball courts next to the existing ball hockey court for fear of increased noise. It is not anticipated that the reorganization of courts will worsen the noise levels within the park. The public benefit of a court expansion on the north of the park is believed to be necessary to expand on recreation offerings and to introduce unscheduled open space for community use.

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 four program spaces.

FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM

The park functional diagram (Figure 9, p.20) 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 center of this functional plan is community space that is well-connected to recreation infrastructure and to park entrances.

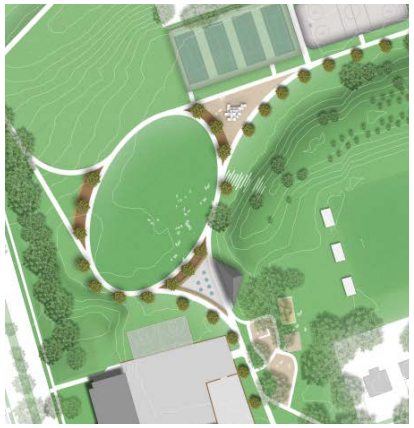
CONCEPT PLAN

The park concept plan (Figure 10, p.21) 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 activated park center, improved path circulation, and some reconfiguration of existing uses to accommodate unscheduled open space. This unscheduled open space has taken the form of a great lawn, a washroom and pavilion area, plaza gathering space with seating, and an option for water play. Ongoing maintenance issues such as poor drainage, inaccessible path surfaces, and poor sightlines will be corrected.

PROGRAM SPACES

To highlight in detail the specific areas of the park concept, four program areas have been identified, described, and illustrated (Figures 11-14, p. 22-25):

1. Inglis Street Entrance;
2. Central Gathering and Amenity Space;
3. Robie Street Entrance; and
4. Wellington Entrance



5.2 FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM

FIGURE 9: GORSEBROOK PARK FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM HIGHLIGHTING PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS.

5.3 CONCEPT PLAN

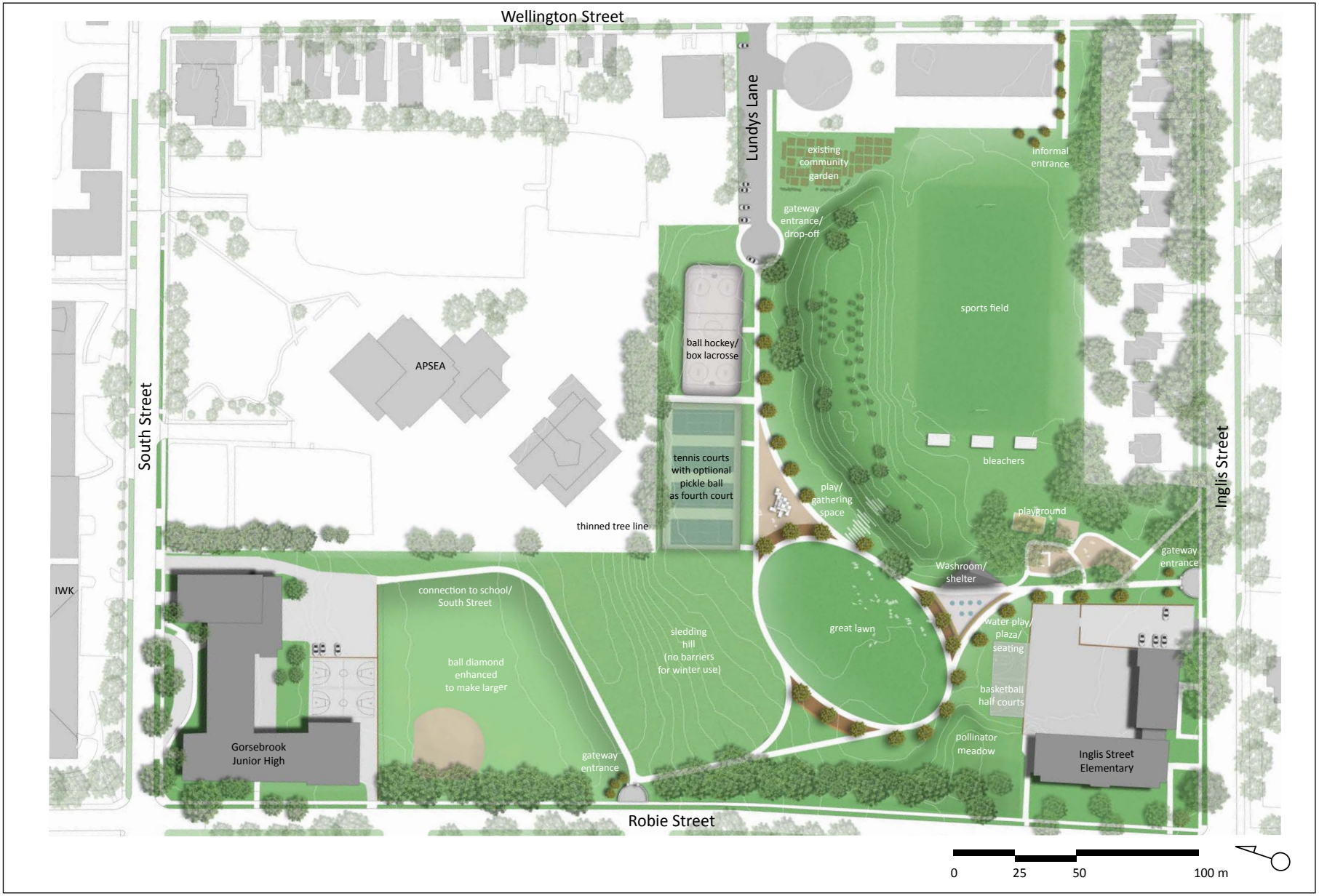


FIGURE 10: GORSEBROOK PARK CONCEPT PLAN HIGHLIGHTING PROPOSED FUTURE CONDITIONS.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

INGLIS STREET ENTRANCE

FIGURE 11: INGLIS STREET ENTRANCE PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently, the park entrance from Inglis Street is via a diagonal asphalt path that meets a gravel and broken asphalt landing at the playground. There is no direct path access from the playground to Inglis Street as this is blocked by an overgrown planting bed. Adjacent to the playground, boulders and a swinging vehicular gate interrupt pedestrian access.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

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. During detailed design development, a relocated road crossing to SMU can be explored to determine if it is feasible. 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 without the need for fencing.

It is proposed that the existing swinging gate be removed, and the existing boulders relocated to the playground as a play feature.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

CENTRAL GATEHRING AND AMENITY SPACE

FIGURE 12: THE GORSEBROOK PARK CENTRAL AMENITY SPACE PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently, much of the park, when scheduled for organized sport, is unavailable for use by the public. In some areas (i.e. near ball diamonds, sports field), it can be difficult for pedestrians to move through these spaces without getting too close to play. Walking surfaces are of varied widths and materials (e.g. asphalt, gravel, grass). There are no formalized walking loops within the park. The tennis courts, basketball courts, and baseball backstop introduce fences into the centre of the park which from a safety, (i.e. pinch points) and visual stand point is not preferred.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

To create more versatile space, a central 'great lawn' for unscheduled activity ringed by a paved walking-loop with lighting and seating is envisioned. An enhancement of the existing Gorsebrook ball diamond could accommodate the removal of the St. Francis diamond without a loss of scheduled hours. This will be reviewed and confirmed through the municipality's upcoming Playing Field Strategy.

When the tennis courts require upgrading, they could be moved to the northern fence line to afford room for the great lawn. No obstructions are proposed that would interfere with sledding on St. Francis Hill. As a precaution, grading would be required along the western tennis court edge to redirect oncoming sledders.

A play area and gathering space between the great lawn and tennis courts could be phased-in over time. This area could offer non-traditional play equipment that is not offered in the existing playground such as climbing boulders, hammocks, and outdoor ping-pong.

In line with a forthcoming park washroom strategy, a centralized pavilion with washrooms and shaded seating area is proposed between the playground and great lawn. The pavilion is proposed to be a gathering and event space with power connections. There is the potential to re-establish small-scale water play within the park. An area for recreation storage will reduce the reliance on outdoor seasonal storage (e.g. fenced cage, shipping containers).

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

ROBIE STREET ENTRANCE

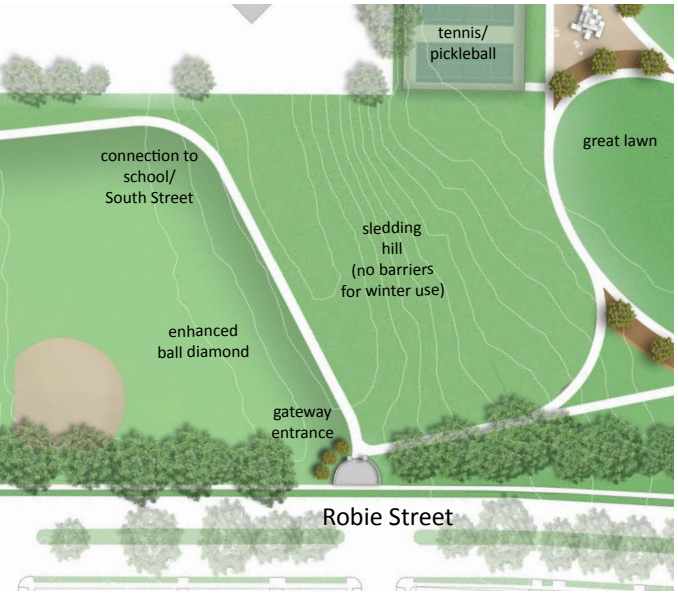


FIGURE 13: ROBIE STREET PARK ENTRANCE PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

As a major park entrance and community connection point, the Robie Street entrance is located mid-block at the Oakland Road crosswalk. Access into the park from Robie Street is difficult due to erosion during heavy precipitation, steep grade, and gravel surface.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

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. Coordinated gateway design and materials are 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 the 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.

5.4 PROGRAM SPACES

WELLINGTON ENTRANCE

FIGURE 14: LUNDYS LANE ENTRANCE PLAN VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Lundys Lane is a road parcel that has, over time, been converted into two bays of parking and a major park entrance. Although a valued parking area for hospital staff, community garden members, and evening park users, this area poses issues. First, as the width of the existing road parcel is too narrow for two bays of perpendicular parking, it poses a safety risk for drivers. Second, as this is a major park entrance, there is no safe way for pedestrians to enter the park except for walking between parked cars. Third, as there is no way for cars to turn around once at the west end of the parking area, cars enter into the park for this purpose.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

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. 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 could prevent cars from driving into the park. A formal park gateway is proposed along the Wellington Street entrance with park signage, lighting, and seating.

During the detailed design phase, this concept for Lundys Lane will require collaboration with Transportation and Public Works (TPW) as this is a road parcel and not parkland.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 TIMELINE

Major project milestones are highlighted in the anticipated project schedule (Table 6). Without confirmed project capital, detailed design development and implementation timelines are only estimates.

TABLE 6: PARK PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT SCHEDULE

Milestone	Date
Information gathering public meeting (hosted by the local Councillor)	Fall 2015
Site inventory and assessment	Summer 2018
Conceptual design development	Fall 2018
Presentation of plans and ideas (public open house)	Winter 2018
Conceptual design refinement	Spring 2019
Presentation of revised concept (online engagement)	Spring 2019
Concept refinement, report development	Summer 2019
Presentation to Regional Council	Fall 2019
Detailed design development	2021/22
Implementation	2022 and beyond

6.2 PROJECT PHASING

Project phasing (Figure 15) will depend on the capital available for park construction, but will also take into consideration facility condition (i.e. when a facility requires recapitalization). Project phasing would allow for the development of the park in stages to avoid a full closure for one or two seasons. Three phases are described, but can be reevaluated if an opportunity for park enhancement presents itself (e.g. external funding, community-led projects).

PHASE 1: BALL DIAMOND AND ROBIE STREET ENTRANCE ENHANCEMENT

Phase one allows much of the park to remain open while the ball diamond enhancement is implemented. The St. Francis diamond would be the only diamond available for booking for the season. While work in the north side of the park is underway, the park entrance at Robie Street can be enhanced.

PHASE 2: TENNIS COURT RELOCATION, LUNDYS LANE UPGRADE.

Once the enhanced Gorsebrook diamond is open, the St. Francis diamond could be removed for the new tennis and pickle ball courts. At the same time, the turn-around, parking, sidewalk, and entrance enhancement at Lundys Lane upgrade is envisioned. The ball hockey/ box lacrosse court could remain open with controlled access.

PHASE 3: CENTRAL PARK, PAVILION DEVELOPMENT, ENTRANCE ENHANCEMENT

The largest of project phases would see the center of the park closed for an entire season, depending on the timing of the construction tender. At the same time, the Inglis entrance enhancement could move forward. The timing of this phase would be to avoid the school-year traffic from the adjacent school. The playground and sports field could remain open with controlled access.

There are properties adjacent to the park that will be developed in the future (e.g. Ronald MacDonald House on South Street). This plan can be revisited with the appropriate parties to determine the best options for a development interface with the park.

As the Province of Nova Scotia and Halifax Regional Centre for Education plan for changes to the existing school footprints within the park boundary, this plan should be revisited to best incorporate a new school structure or to develop new park space in the event of a school closure.

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.

Timing will also need to consider when certain existing facilities will require replacement. Portions of this project (e.g. Lundys Lane recapitalization) may be outside of project budgets as work would be coordinated with Transportation and Public Works (TPW) given their ownership of the road parcel. There is also the opportunity for the community be involved with fundraising for the coordination of park enhancements.

6.4 PHASING DIAGRAM

FIGURE 15: POTENTIAL PARK PHASING DIAGRAM.