

1.0 BEDFORD WEST PARK PLANNING

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Parks and Recreation staff have started the park planning process to identify how park facilities can be improved to serve the needs of local residents in Bedford West.

The first phase of public engagement was conducted from February 1 - March 8, 2021 in the form of an online survey. The second phase of public engagement is now underway.

To accommodate this process, the park planning project was added to the Parks and Recreation 2021/22 budget and business plan.

WHY?

As Bedford West quickly expands, park issues and opportunities have been brought forward by the area Councillor, organized recreation groups, residents, and operations staff.

A Park Facilities Plan is a useful tool to inventory existing park facilities, guide park enhancements over time, and to ensure that work is in-keeping with public expectation.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

As a follow-up to Phase #1 of public engagement (online survey), we want your feedback on the 'What We Heard' and 'Park Opportunities' summaries (attached).

- Are these summaries an accurate reflection of public feedback and community need?
- Do you see elements that you like or dislike? Why?

TIMELINE



2.0 WHAT WE HEARD SUMMARY

ROUND ONE: VALUES GATHERING

The purpose of the first engagement program was to collect the issues and opportunities that the public have encountered and how park projects should be prioritized. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were limited opportunities for in-person engagement. However, staff developed an online survey to capture public feedback. The survey was open for public comment from February 1 until March 8, 2021.

ONLINE SURVEY SUMMARY

Demographics

The online survey was completed by 379 individuals, with the following composition:

- 84% of survey respondents live in Bedford West; 30% of those who reside in the community are relatively new (2 years or less); 29% have lived in the community for 3-5 years; 15% have lived in the community for 6-10 years; and 9% of respondents have lived in the community for more than 10 years;
- No one under the age of 18 years completed the survey. Approximately 15% of respondents are between the ages of 19 to 34 years; 51% of survey respondents are between the ages of 35-49 years; 20% are between the ages of 50 to 64 years; and 12% are 65 years or older (Figure 2);
- 58% of survey respondents are female and

39% male; 1 respondent identified as non-binary and 6 respondents preferred not to answer;

- Approximately 45% of households have four or more people; 55% of households have one to three people per household (Figure 3);
- Approximately 71% of respondents live in a single family home, 18% are living in an apartment or condo and 11% living in a townhouse or duplex (Figure 4).

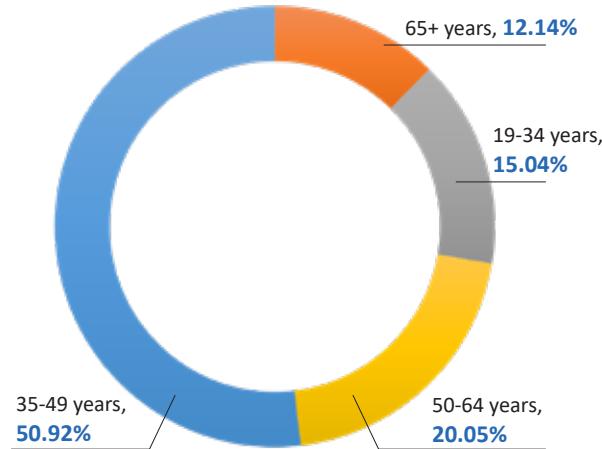


FIGURE 2: AGE BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS.

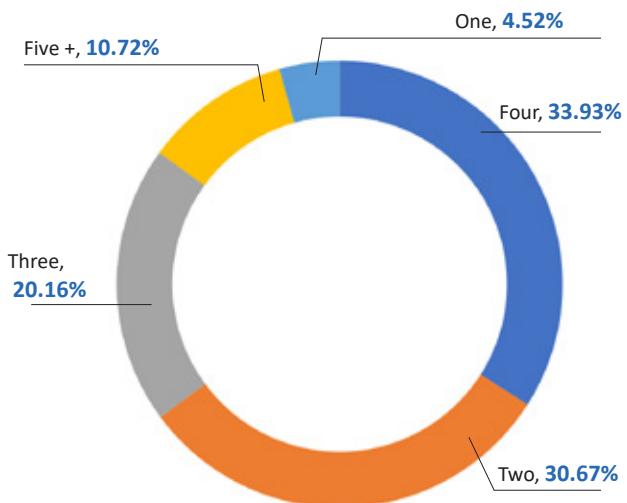


FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF PEOPLE PER HOUSEHOLD.

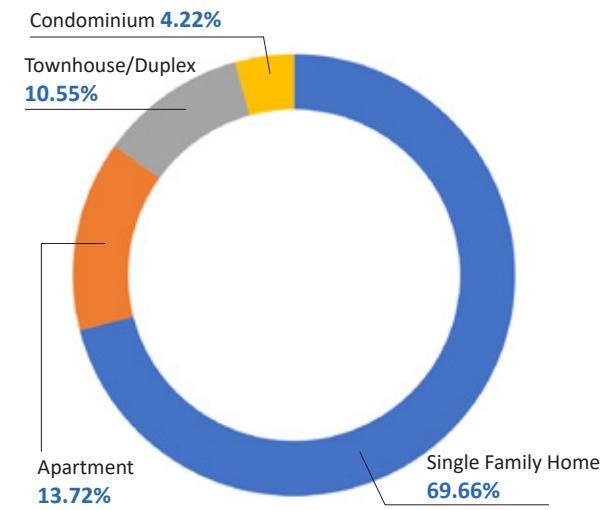
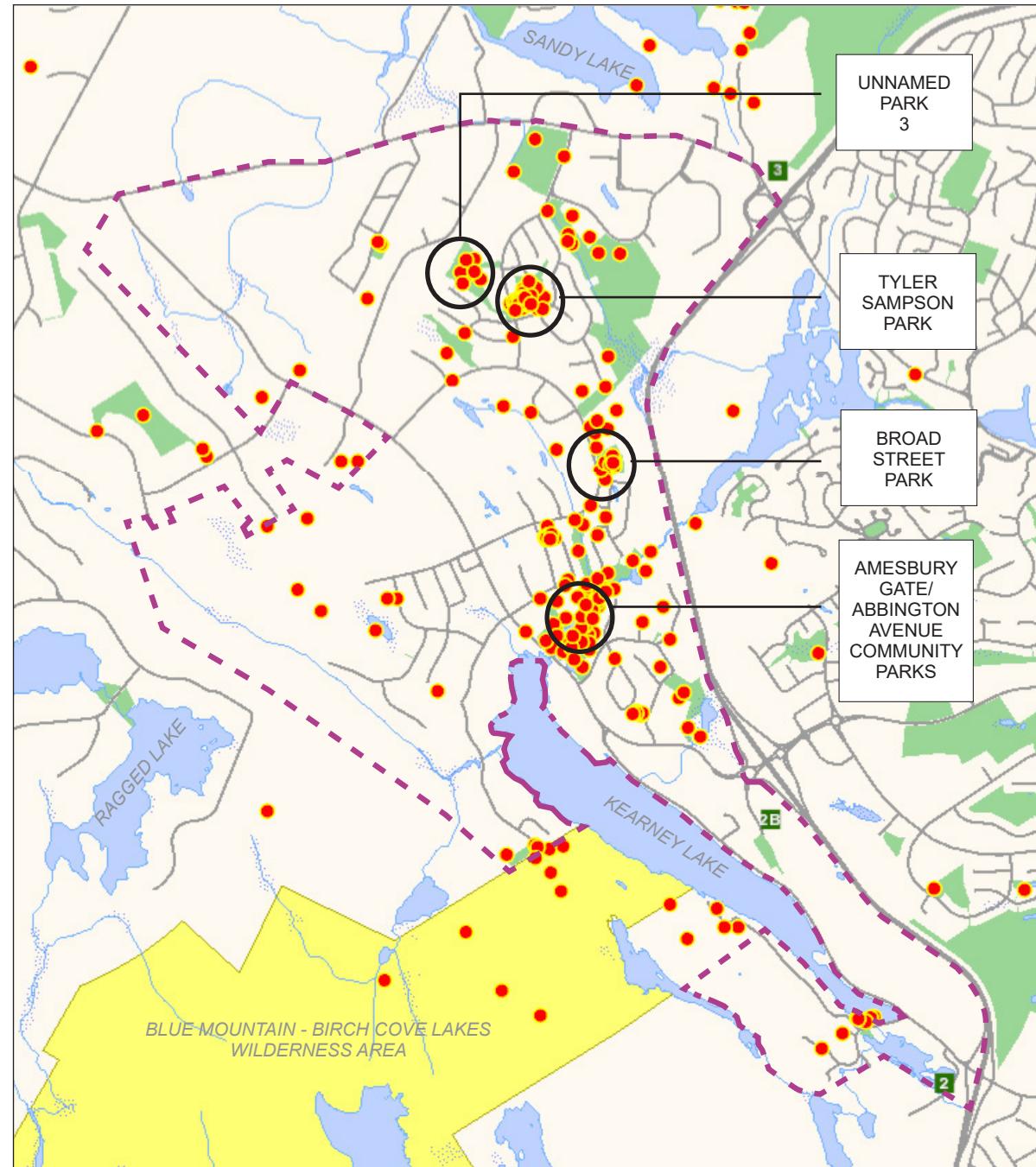


FIGURE 4: BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS' LIVING SITUATION.

Park User Experiences

- When asked why residents visit parks, a series of responses were frequent: personal and family exercise, to walk and run dogs, to let kids play on the playgrounds, and to connect with and relax in nature. It is clear that these daily interactions with parks are important for respondents;
- 56% of survey respondents said that they visit parks a few times per week, 23% visit a park at least once per week;
- 83% of survey respondents say they walk/roll to use parks within the community; 26% said they bike, 36% said they drive to visit parks. Note that respondents were able to select more than one mode of travel;
- The majority of respondents identified that they do not require special accommodation when visiting parks. Some elderly respondents identified mobility issues that limit travel distances on foot and the need to rest frequently. Some respondents mentioned the importance of access for families with strollers. A few respondents identified themselves as living with a disability, needing access to low-sensory natural environments;
- Although respondents identified that they do visit parks in other areas of the municipality, the most frequently visited parks are close to home within the community (Map 8); and
- Respondents said that when they do leave the community to use parks, it is because certain recreation infrastructure is not available close to home (e.g. off-leash dog facilities, swimming and water play, tennis courts, sportfields, playgrounds with wider variety of play, bike trails, accessible wilderness trails), or simply for a change of scenery.



MAP 1: SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PRIMARY LOCATION FOR PARK ACCESS AND RECREATION.

Park Issues

Survey respondents identified a number of park issues that negatively impact their use of parkland in the community. In total, 11 categories have been summarized below.

Connectivity

There is concern from some respondents that some parts of the community are isolated from each other. Some established trails in the community dead-end or are incomplete.

Investment in parks

Some respondents believe that parks are underdeveloped with many parcels left forested or grassed. The level of investment in facilities is not seen to be keeping up to community expectations or the demand.

Active open space

Respondents have stressed that there is a lack of large-scale open space for active recreation. Sportfields, bike facilities, splash pad, and sport courts are some of the commonly mentioned features that are lacking for the community.

Maintenance

A commonly identified issue is the lack of regular maintenance of green spaces within the community. Mowing, drainage, dying trees, and garbage collection being the mostly frequently mentioned.

Wayfinding & signage

Respondents believe that wayfinding to identify trails and to direct people is needed within the community. There is a lack of understanding of park/land ownership and rules for park users.

Overuse of parks

The community is growing quickly and respondents frequently mentioned the

increasing demand for parks and parks facilities. The level of use is seen to be unsustainable and in certain places (e.g. Kearney Lake Beach), damaging to the natural environment.

Road safety

Although not under parks management, respondents maintain that accessing parks can be problematic given the speed of traffic, road widths, lack of crosswalks, and poor sight lines.

Dogs off leash

The presence of dogs in parks is polarizing. Both the presence of dogs off leash, lack of enforcement, and the lack of places for dogs to be off leash are cited as issues within the community.

Park safety

Some respondents cite safety as a concern. The attention to parks, maintenance, and visibility were identified as issues. While safety and crime were not extensively raised as issues, this was cited in a survey response.

Development pressure

Some respondents identified the challenges living in construction, construction impacts on parkland, and safety for those trying to access parkland. There is concern that land that could be parkland is being built upon instead of being retained as natural space.

Parking

A lack of enforcement of parking on road shoulders for those accessing parks is a concern for some survey respondents. The lack of parking for park users is also cited as an issue.



Park (including swimming area) is insufficient for the population growth in the area. It is often overcrowded, no washroom outside of the two month summer season, wharf is a danger and not maintained, parking is challenging.



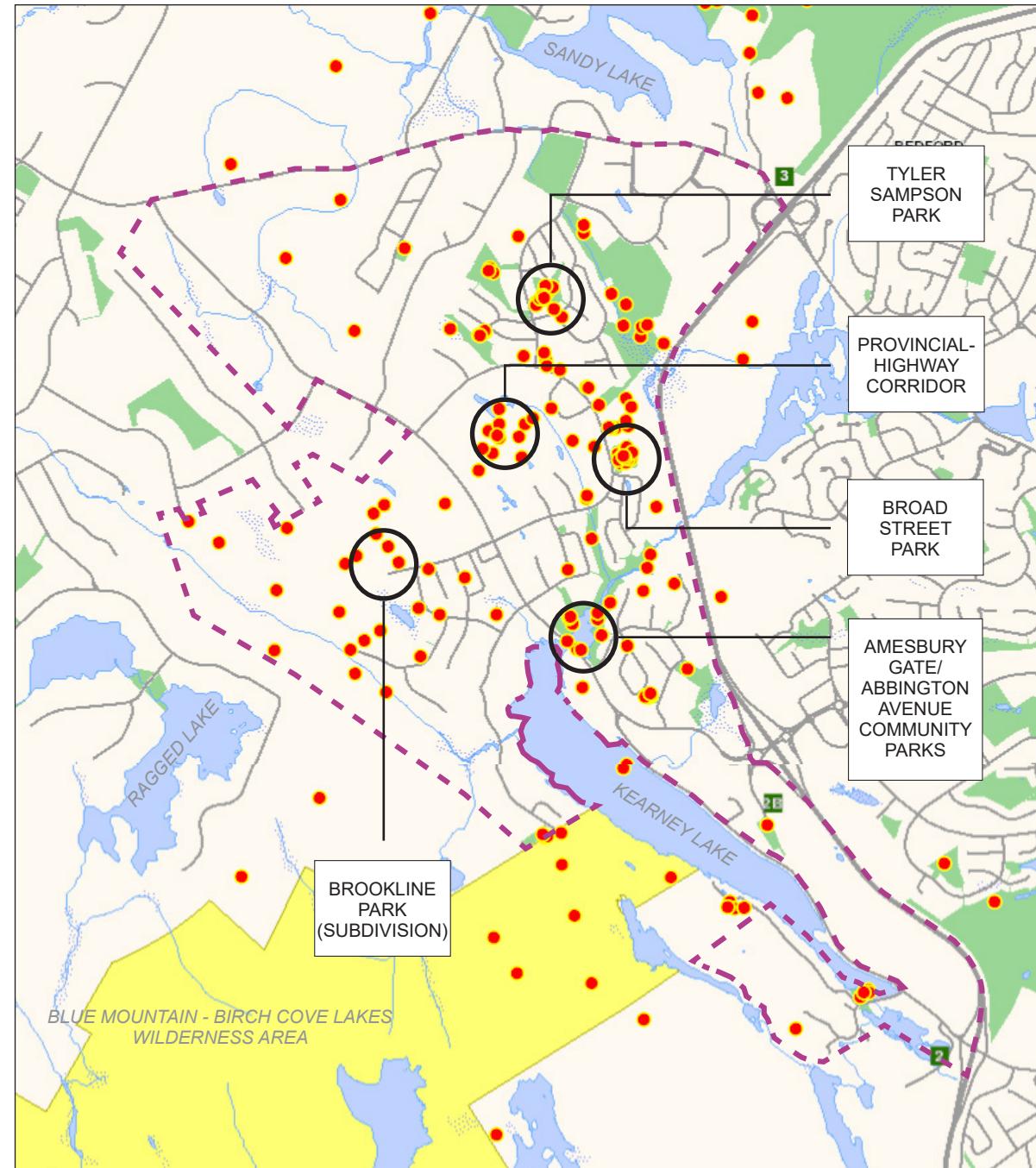
Broad Street Park is called a park but there is nothing there except a hill to sled on in the winter.



Park Opportunities

Survey respondents identified park opportunities spatially with a mapping function. Although there were many parks and lands identified throughout the community and outside the community (Map 9), some of the most frequently mentioned opportunity spaces include,

- *Broad Street Park:* Without knowing some of the limitations within the park as they relate to stormwater functions, respondents are looking for a developed park for recreation. Some suggested ideas for development include, a dog park, sport courts (e.g. tennis, basketball, ball hockey), garbage cans, outdoor skating rink, park lighting, splash pad, inclusive playground, skate park, pump track;
- *Tyler Sampson Park:* There is interest from respondents to expand on the existing play elements, including additional playground equipment for older youth, sport courts (e.g. tennis, basketball, ball hockey, multi-purpose), skate park, dog park, picnic areas, splash pad, and trails;
- *Provincial Highway Corridor:* Without knowing the ownership or future of the parcel, many respondents identified opportunities in the wooded area including trail development for recreation and community connection, outdoor field sports, a pool, splash pad, community gardens and oven, and a dog off-leash area;
- *Brookline Park (subdivision under development):* When identifying opportunities for park uses on the west side of Larry Uteck Boulevard, respondents were interested in seeing places for sport courts (e.g. pickleball, tennis, basketball), trail development, pedestrian connections to Kingswood and BMBCL, community gardens



MAP 2: PARK OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS.

- *Amesbury Gate/Abbington Avenue*

Community Parks: Respondents recognized the opportunity to connect the existing trail system along the power corridor towards Broad Street Park. There are trail sections that dead-end that could be looped to continue the network (e.g. Larry Uteck Blvd). A floating dock would make water access easier in this area.

More general open-ended park opportunity comments were collected and have been organized into 11 categories.

Park development

Broadly speaking, many respondents are looking for parks to be developed within the community beyond forested parcels or flat turfed areas.

Sport Courts

Many respondents said that they have to leave the community to seek active recreation options (e.g. pickleball, tennis, basketball, ball hockey, multipurpose pads). Sport courts within walking distance are described as important.

Preservation of natural lands

Some survey respondents see more opportunities to protect natural forested lands and natural connections from development and to see those lands preserved for recreation.

Water access

Respondents see opportunities to expand upon the one main beach access point (i.e. Kearney Lake Beach) to include other points of access with amenities (e.g. floating docks). A small number of comments requesting a community pool were also collected;

Interactive water play

When describing opportunities to enhance

existing park and playgrounds, a number of respondents would like to see the development of splash pads.

Trail development

Trails are highly valued within the community, respondents are looking for further trail development to complete loops and enhance experiences. Signage and wayfinding is also valued.

Dog Off-leash areas

Although also presented as an issue, a number of respondents would like to see formalized areas for dogs to run and socialize within the community.

Winter recreation

Opportunities for parks to offer play during the winter months was described as important. Specifically, maintaining existing hills where children already sled, wide trails for cross-country skiing, and also spaces to flood for skating and hockey.

Playgrounds

Although there are some playgrounds within the community, residents see an opportunity for playgrounds that offer expanded play for all ages.

Regional active space

Beyond the traditional recreation offerings found in parks, there is an interest within the community to see more unique features like a skate park and a pump track.

Field sports

Some respondents would like to see more park spaces developed with sportfields or open areas to run and play. Additional equipment like soccer nets are seen as desirable.



In the Parks of West Bedford there needs to be a bigger park rather than smaller ones. Something with a field, basketball court, splash pad. Something that is all-encompassing. Something that attracts the older kids.



There are a lot of trail sections throughout the West Bedford area, but they are not connected. Connecting them to form a network of trails would be ideal.



Park Priorities

When asked to prioritize specific park facilities that should be included in future park development plans, survey respondents ranked facilities on a scale from 1 to 5, five being the most important (Figure 5).

Facility Priorities

Some facilities resonated with respondents. For example, 85% of respondents see continued trail development as important within the community; 75% of respondents see more tree planting a priority; 71% of respondents see

the passive use of nature as important; 65% of respondents see lake access as important; 56% of respondents see winter activities (e.g. cross-country skiing, skating, hockey, sledding) as important; 53% of survey respondents see water play (i.e. splash pad) as important within the community; 51% of respondents see the development of new playgrounds as important; and 41% of respondents saw multipurpose sport courts as important.

Other facility priorities are not quite as clear, for example, within open ended responses

elsewhere in the survey, sport courts are one of the most requested features within parks. However, when asked to prioritize, only 29% of respondents described basketball courts as important and 26% of respondents described tennis as important. Regarding ball hockey courts, 36% of respondents selected this facility as unimportant. Approximately 11% of respondents saw pickleball as important.

When asked to prioritize sportfields, approximately 33% of respondents placed importance on this facility. Although there

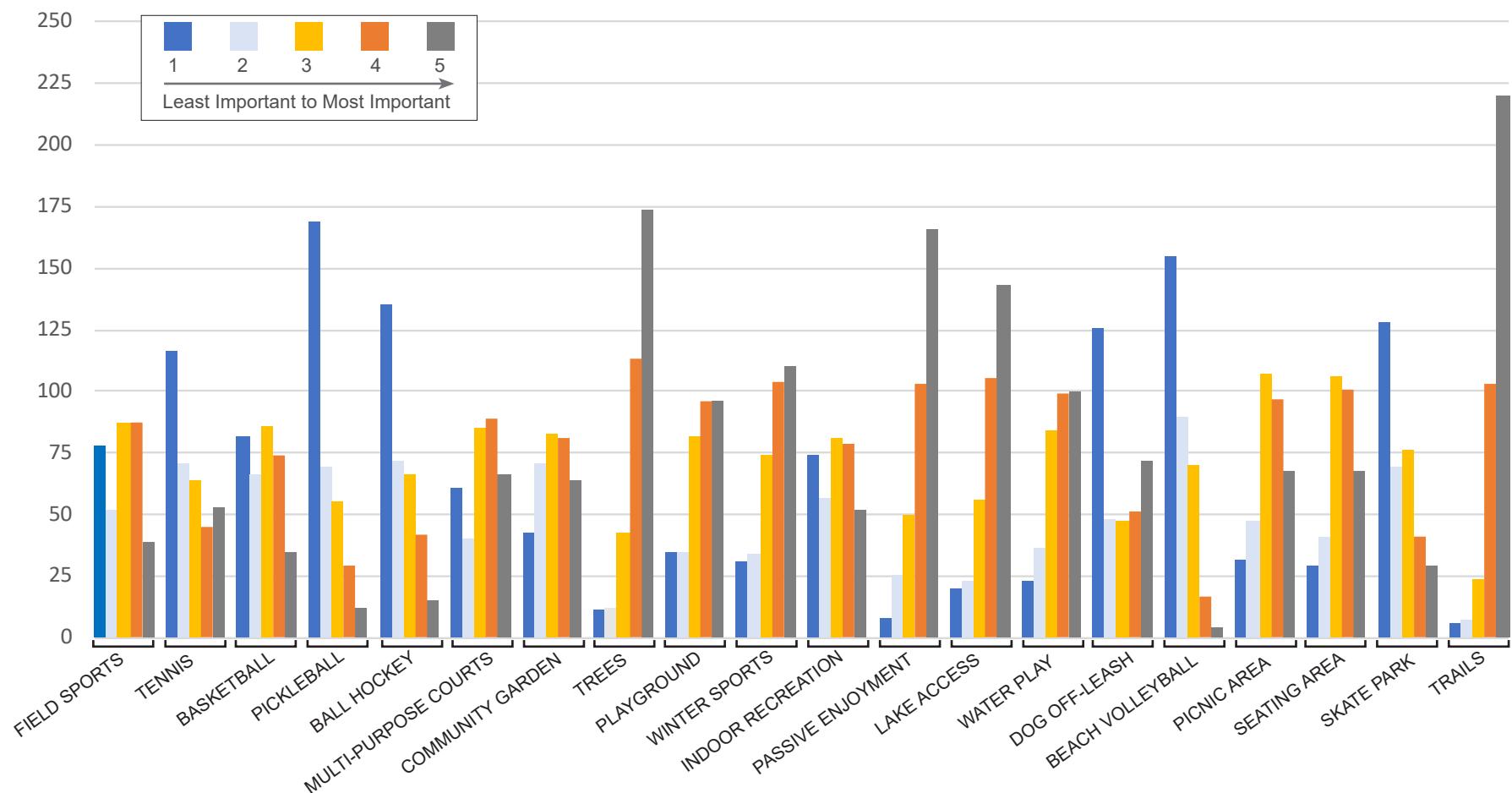


FIGURE 5: PARK FACILITY PRIORITIES.

are no registered community garden groups within the community, approximately 38% of respondents view places to grow food as important. The priority for indoor recreation facilities in parks was quite split amongst survey respondents with the same number of people describing it as unimportant as important. Despite many comments supporting dog off-leash facilities, prioritization within the community is also split with approximately 54% of respondents describing off-leash facilities as important. Approximately 65% of survey respondents see beach volleyball as unimportant. About 18.5% of survey respondents selected a skate park as an important facility within the community.

With the understanding that capital is limited and that upgrades must be funded over many years, survey respondents were also asked to prioritize the types of facilities that they would like to see funded and implemented first. In order of the most frequently mentioned facilities:

1. Trail development
2. Off-leash dog park/off-leash trails
3. Tennis courts
4. Swimming pool
5. Splash pad
6. Playground
7. Protection of natural lands
8. Lake access
9. Tree planting
10. Skate Park

SUMMARY

- The majority of respondents (84%) live within the community;
- The majority of respondents (85%) are over the age of 34;
- While there were no respondents 18 years of age or younger, many respondents were clearly parents and were identifying needs for children;
- Respondents maintain that parks are an essential component of life for exercise, family recreation, and personal well-being;
- Parks and facilities within walking distance to home are preferred as the majority (83%) of survey respondents walk to visit parks;
- Many respondents described the need to leave to community to recreate because parks within Bedford West lack a wide variety of active recreation facilities;
- Trail development continues to be an important community asset and was one of the most frequently mentioned facilities within the survey;
- Frequently mentioned issues observed in community parkland include: a lack of trail connectivity, overuse of existing parks; under investment in park finishes and maintenance; a lack of large-scale open spaces for a variety of facilities; a lack of wayfinding and signage; a gap in enforcement of dog off-leash activity and a lack of official places for dogs; perceived issues with road safety en route to parks; continued development pressure on parks and natural lands; and a lack of parking for those arriving to parks via vehicle;
- Frequently mentioned opportunities for park development include: improving the level of finish beyond forested and turfed open space; sport courts, the protection of forested lands; improved access to Kearney

Lake; water play via splash pads; official dog off-leash areas; spaces conducive for winter recreation; playgrounds offering a wide range of play; sportfields; and active recreation space that allows for the collocation of multiple facilities.

- The top three priorities, as identified by respondents, include the development of trails, off-leash dog parks, and tennis courts.

3.0 VALUES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

While it is important to note that this document is not a capital funding plan, the following pages are a high-level consolidation of public feedback while incorporating what is known about the physical landscape, land ownership, existing park facilities, community demographics, and guiding municipal plans and policy. Identifying park opportunities is an interim step in the planning process; the enclosed details will be expanded as this plan continues to be refined, approved by Regional Council, and considered in annual Parks and Recreation business plans and budgets.

Park facility opportunities proposed for the community are broadly categorized into:

AREAS FOR POSSIBLE PARK ENHANCEMENT

As identified on the map below (Map 3) with red circle markers, areas of possible enhancement include trail development, tree planting, seating, playground expansion, and other interventions that may be more immediate.

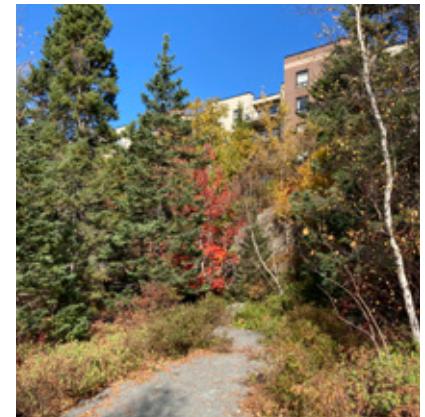
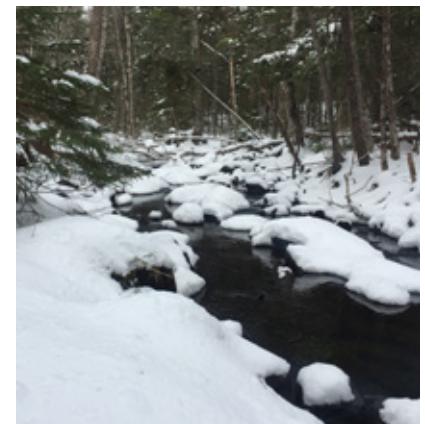
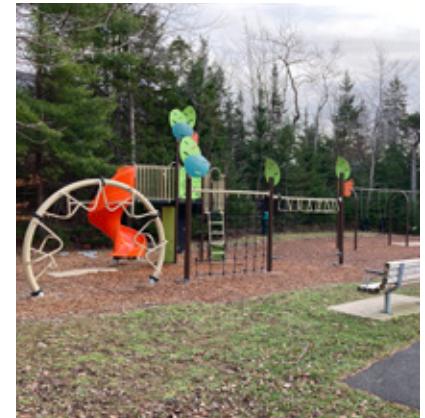
MAJOR OPPORTUNITY SITES

Given their size, distribution, and ability to fill gaps in park service delivery, ten parks present the best opportunity for the introduction of recreation facilities to serve the community (Map 4). These opportunities are identified with yellow circle markers. These ten parks will require additional site planning and detailed design to implement the proposed opportunities, which include walkways, sport courts, playgrounds, water play and water access, among other facilities.

HOW WERE OPPORTUNITIES DETERMINED?

There are many limitations for the development of parks in the municipality including timelines, budgets, annual maintenance needs, and compatibility with individual neighbourhoods. With almost 400 survey submissions, there were many different ideas for how parks should be planned and managed into the future. Not all ideas are feasible, but staff have attempted to balance these requests.

There are some park opportunities that have been identified by the public that are specialized and require further evaluation before they can be incorporated into parks within the community (e.g. Dog-off leash area, pump track, and skate park). Dog off-leash areas in particular are guided by an Administrative Order that requires a minimum park area and be set away from residential areas, along with focused community consultation that would be prioritized against an existing workplan.



AREAS FOR POSSIBLE PARK ENHANCEMENT

#1 UNNAMED PARK 3

Expanded trail system with seating and park signage.

#2 TYLER SAMPSON PARK

Development of a trail to Lasalle Court. Shaded seating/picnic area.

#3 STONINGTON PARK

Trail seating and park signage.

#4 LARKVIEW TERRACE PARK

Tree planting, seating area, and park signage.

#5 SAMAA COURT PARK

Tree planting, seating area, and park signage.

#6 FUTURE BROOKLINE PARK

Neighbourhood playground, tree planting, seating and park signage.

#7 EVANDALE LANE PARK

Tree planting.

#8 ABBINGTON AVENUE COMMUNITY PARK

Development of a trail along the water beside the Kearney Lake Dam. Trail seating and park signage. Improved water access.

#9 AMESBURY GATE COMMUNITY PARK

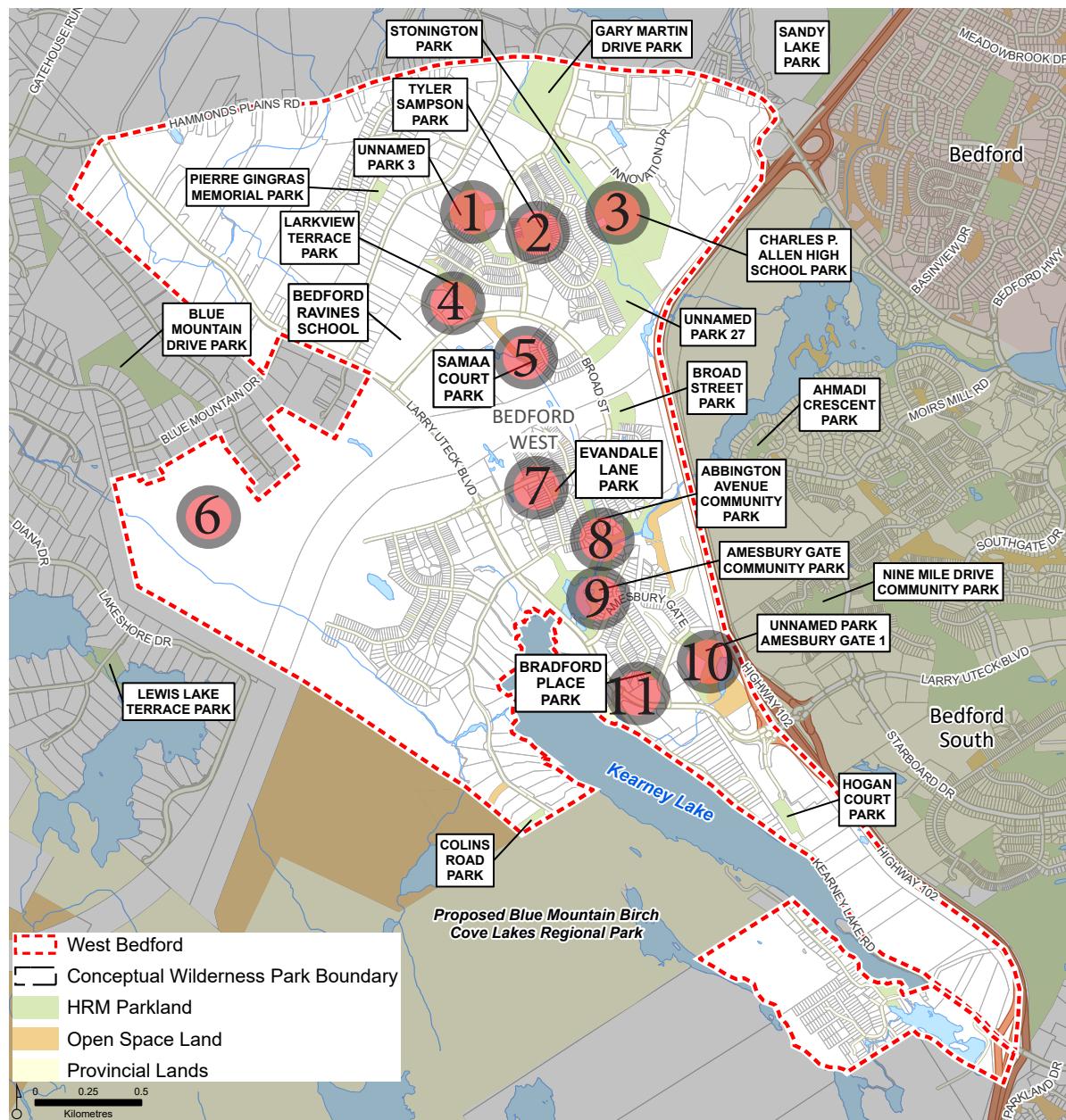
Connect existing trail into multi-use path proposed along Larry Uteck. Trail seating and park signage.

#10 UNNAMED PARK AMESBURY GATE 1

Trail seating and park signage.

#11 BRADFORD PLACE PARK

Shaded seating and tree planting.



MAP 3: RECOMMENDED AREAS OF PARK ENHANCEMENT.

MAJOR SITE OPPORTUNITIES

#1 GARY MARTIN DRIVE PARK

The collocation of a specialized park facility may be considered along Hammonds Plains Road. Improve access to the existing beach volleyball courts.

#2 UNNAMED PARK 27

Tennis courts, seating, park signage, and tree planting.

#3 BROAD STREET PARK

Perimeter walking path, sledding hill, accessible playground and splash feature, sheltered picnic area, multiuse sport court, tree planting, park signage, and space for a community garden.

#4 BEDFORD RAVINES SCHOOL

School development falls to the Province of Nova Scotia, but will include a sportsfield, basketball court, and playgrounds.

#5 BEDFORD WEST SUB PHASE 12

As this sub phase develops, park planning will be guided by the Park Facilities Plan.

#6 FUTURE BROOKLINE DRIVE SPORT PARK

Tennis court, basketball court, sportsfield, tree planting, seating, and park signage.

#7 FUTURE BROOKLINE LEISURE PARK

Perimeter walking path, picnic area, play lawn, tree planting, and park signage.

#8 FUTURE BROOKLINE VILLAGE GREEN

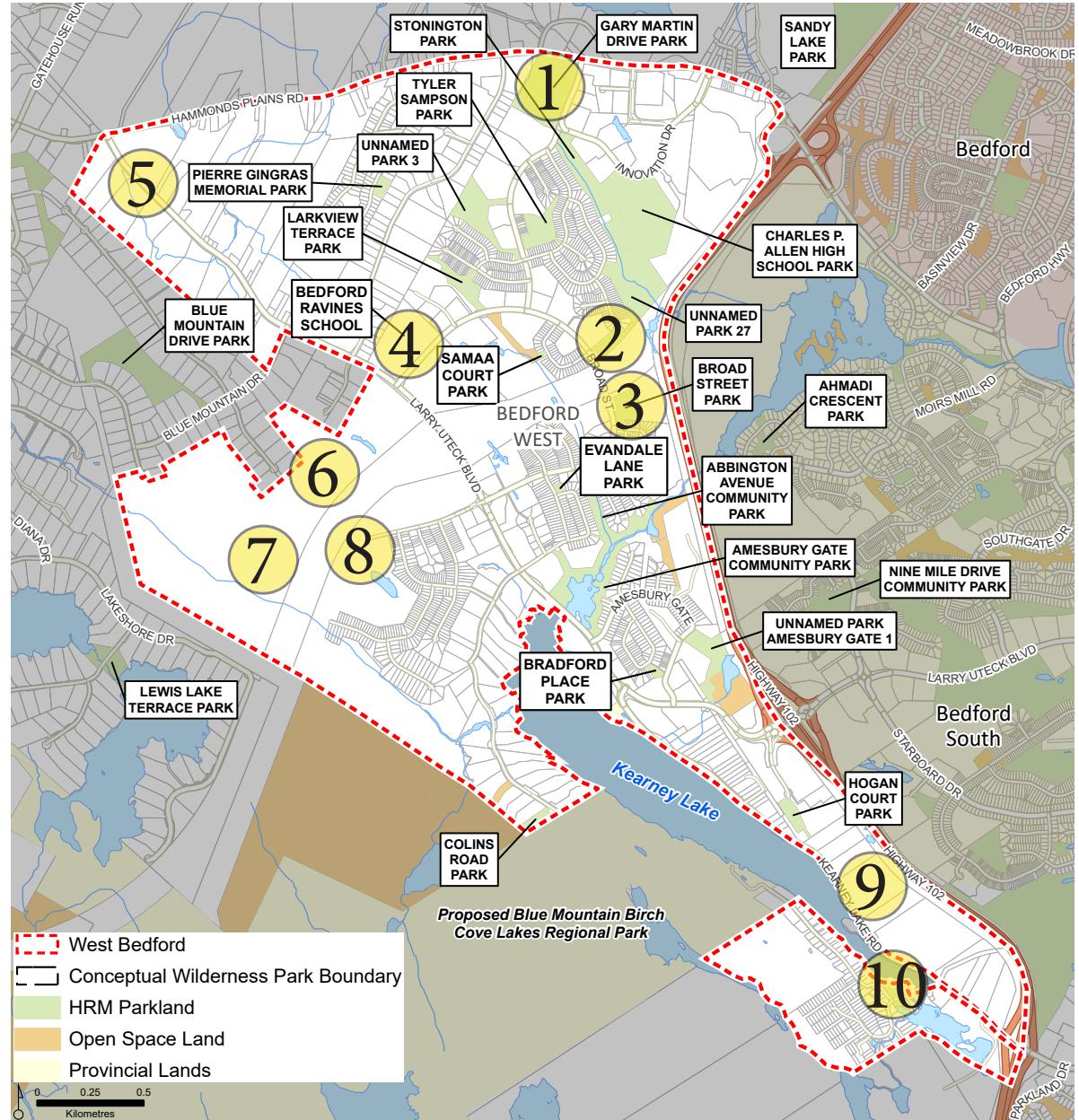
Playground, picnic area, walking path, pickleball courts, play lawn, and tree planting.

#9 BEDFORD WEST SUB PHASE 10

As this sub phase develops, park planning will be guided by the Park Facilities Plan.

#10 KEARNEY LAKE BEACH PARK

Improved pedestrian experience and parking, park signage.



MAP 4: PARKS IDENTIFIED TO HAVE MAJOR SITE OPPORTUNITIES.

4.0 WHAT'S NEXT?

CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Yes. Three initiatives in particular are well-suited for community not-for-profit organizations:

- Trail planning/building;
- Community tree planting; and
- Community gardening

There are process in place to direct the useful efforts of residents. Contact Stephen Cushing for more information: cushins@halifax.ca

NEXT STEPS

The next major milestone for the Bedford West Park Facilities Plan is to develop a report for Regional Council in the Fall of 2021 that outlines long-term park opportunities that can be implemented over time. Subject to Regional Council approval, the detailed design and implementation of park facilities will be determined as they can be incorporated into annual business plans and budgets.

Some park facility may advance more quickly than others as new neighbourhoods develop. However, all park enhancements will be guided by the direction outlined during this park planning process.

