



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

Item No. 15.5.1
Halifax Regional Council
February 24, 2026

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM: Councillor Kent, Chair, Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council

DATE: February 9, 2026

SUBJECT: **Park Plan for the North Woodside Community Centre Park**

ORIGIN

February 9, 2026 meeting of Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council, Item 14.1.1.

RECOMMENDATION

The Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council recommends that Halifax Regional Council adopt the North Woodside Community Centre Park Plan as a guiding document for future park improvements as set out in the staff report dated November 26, 2025.

BACKGROUND

Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council received a staff recommendation report dated November 26, 2025 to consider the proposed park plan for the North Woodside Community Centre Park as a guiding document for future park improvements.

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated November 26, 2025.

DISCUSSION

Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council considered the staff report dated November 26, 2025 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated November 26, 2025.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated November 26, 2025.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meetings of the Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council are open to public attendance. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Community Council are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated November 26, 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated November 26, 2025.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated November 26, 2025.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated November 26, 2025.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Part 1, Clause 25(c):

The powers and duties of a Community Council include recommending to the Council appropriate by-laws, regulations, controls and development standards for the community.

Administrative Order Number 48, the *Community Council Administrative Order
Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council*

3B. (1) The Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council may:

- (a) in accordance with subsections 31(2) of the Charter, approve a development agreement, or an amendment to a development agreement, applicable to their community, except for those shaded areas shown on Schedule 6A as being within the Suburban Housing Accelerator Planning Area; and
- (b) in accordance with subsection 30(3) of the Charter, amend a land use by-law applicable to their community [...]

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated November 26, 2025.

Report Prepared by: Simon Ross-Siegel, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office 902.292.3962

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

Item No. 14.1.1
Harbour East Marine-Drive Community Council
February 9, 2026

TO: Chair and Members of Harbour East Marine Drive Community Council

FROM: Jacqueline Hamilton, Acting Commissioner of Operations

DATE: November 26, 2025

SUBJECT: Park Plan for the North Woodside Community Centre Park

ORIGIN

December 7, 2023 Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council Meeting (11.3.1):

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT Harbour East Marine-Drive Community Council request a staff recommendation report on a Parks Plan for the North Woodside Community Park.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

October 3, 2024 Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council Meeting (14.1.2):

MOVED by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT the Harbour East-Marine Drive Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to include the development of a park plan for the North Woodside Community Centre Park within the municipality's 2025/26 Budget and Business Plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

November 12, 2024 Regional Council Meeting (15.4.1):

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Purdy

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to include the development of a park plan for the North Woodside Community Centre Park within the municipality's 2025/26 Budget and Business Plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2023, a community presentation to Harbour East - Marine Drive Community Council (HEMDC) led to a request for a staff report and the creation of a park plan to guide long-term improvements to the North Woodside Community Centre Park.

North Woodside Community Centre Park is an important recreational space serving several neighbourhoods and functioning as a hub alongside the North Woodside Community Centre. Existing facilities within the park include playgrounds, a half basketball court, an outdoor gym, pathways, a play lawn, wooded and naturalized areas, and benches. Functional issues within the park limit its ability to serve

a wide range of users, but these challenges can be addressed through park planning.

This report presents a conceptual park plan, shaped through community engagement, to clarify the park's purpose and character and guide future improvements. The proposed plan highlights a parking lot expansion, an enhanced pathway network and improved accessibility, better access and use of wooded areas, and a reorganization of active uses within the park's centre.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Harbour East Marine-Drive Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council adopt the North Woodside Community Centre Park Plan as a guiding document for future park improvements.

BACKGROUND

The North Woodside Community Centre Park covers 2.65 hectares (6.5 acres) along Pleasant Street, with direct access to the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail. Within the park, the municipally owned but community-managed North Woodside Community Centre and its parking lot occupy 0.32 hectares (0.8 acres). As the most developed park on the Dartmouth waterfront, it serves as a community hub, offering playgrounds, a half basketball court, an outdoor gym, walking paths, a play lawn, and naturalized areas (Attachments A and B).

In December 2023, Harbour East–Marine Drive Community Council (HEMDCC) received a joint presentation from the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, the North Woodside Community Centre, and HomeBridge Youth Society. The presentation highlighted community priorities for improving park safety, aesthetics, accessibility, recreational opportunities, and the protection of natural spaces. In response, HEMDCC requested a staff report and the creation of a park plan.

Presented within this report is a conceptual plan shaped by community engagement to establish a shared vision, guide future improvements, and coordinate initiatives beyond the ad-hoc proposals of recent years.

DISCUSSION

Within North Woodside Community Centre Park, residents and community groups have shown a strong commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant public space. Their efforts in recent years have included participation in planning initiatives, organizing community events, and collaborating with local elected officials to secure support for park improvements. Despite this grassroots dedication, the park continues to face functional challenges related to accessibility, connectivity, visibility, and physical constraints such as utilities and grades. Park planning provides an opportunity to address these issues and establish a comprehensive vision that aligns community needs and aspirations into a coordinated plan.

To develop a conceptual park plan, an evaluation was conducted considering the:

- presence of recreational facilities within the surrounding community;
- demographic breakdown of the community and engagement respondents;
- suitability of the site for redevelopment;
- results of previously conducted planning initiatives related to the park; and
- results of a public review of the draft park concept.

Public Engagement

As project initiators, the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, North Woodside Community Centre, and HomeBridge Youth Society were engaged throughout the planning process to share community knowledge and review proposed park changes.

Public engagement included two opportunities in the summer of 2025: an open house and an online survey (Attachment C).

Public Open House, June 25, 2025

At the public open house, approximately 40 residents attended and provided input on the North Woodside Community Centre Park concept plan. Parking emerged as the most frequent concern, with participants noting that existing parking is already at capacity, particularly during events and daycare pick-up and drop-off times. Residents also expressed strong interest in adding water play opportunities, better separating cyclists from pedestrians on narrow pathways while maintaining trail connectivity, and including amenities such as seating, power connections, washroom access, and shade to support community programming and events. Participants emphasized the importance of personalizing the park to reflect local history and identity, protecting and enhancing natural areas, and accommodating users of all ages and abilities. Other suggestions included the planting of trees, stabilizing ditch embankments, showcasing community pride through painted sport courts or collaborative student projects, adding benches, lighting, and garbage cans, providing a waterfront viewing area, and posting clear rules for dogs.

Online Survey, June 25 to July 23, 2025

A total of 60 residents completed the online public survey, with about 85% responding on behalf of their households (average size 2.78 people). Project awareness extended further, with 800 participants visiting the project website and 170 downloading the proposed park concept. Most respondents (69%) live within the North Woodside community, with the remainder primarily from nearby Dartmouth neighbourhoods.

Overall, survey feedback showed strong support for the proposed park concept, with 84% of respondents satisfied and 74% agreeing it balanced developed parkland and natural woodland. Most felt the mix of structured and unstructured recreation was appropriate, though some wanted more formal facilities (21%) or more passive space (13.5%). A majority (64%) agreed the plan allows for future growth and park use, though opinions were divided on whether wooded areas should be used for parking or recreation, with nearly half supporting such use and 40% preferring preservation. Accessibility was generally viewed positively, with 57% agreeing the plan addresses access needs, though some respondents were unsure due to the limited presentation of design details. Two-thirds of respondents said the changes would increase their park use. The most common suggestions for improvement were the addition of a water or splash feature, more parking, washroom access, safer and better-defined entrances, activation of the wooded area, a dog off-leash area, and additional sport courts.

Park Concept Highlights

To enhance the existing park facilities and uses, the following key changes are proposed and are illustrated in Attachment D:

Centralized play area

When the existing playground is due for recapitalization, a reconfigured, centralized play area is envisioned to bring play elements closer together and connecting them with paved pathways. The plan incorporates both traditional play structures and natural play features, offering a wider variety of experiences. Natural play elements could be integrated into the existing wooded area and added gradually over time. An improved play lawn, encircled by a walking track, would support in-park exercise and provide a safe space for walking and rolling. A small interactive water feature is also proposed at the park's center.

Trail connectivity & accessibility

A paved pathway network is proposed to connect facilities together and improve access to the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail. A wide paved route is proposed to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. Secondary trails through the wooded areas would be designed to maximize drainage and maintain a natural aesthetic. Accessibility improvements include reducing grades where possible, adding seating throughout, and creating an accessible park look-off adjacent to the parking lot. Lighting is proposed to enhance visibility after dark.

Preserved & enhanced natural space

The proposed plan represents a compromise between preserving natural space and accommodating developed uses, allowing a portion of the wooded area to be used for parking and a sport court. Despite these changes, 1.25 hectares (3.1 acres) of woodland are retained, with improved access for recreational use. Ongoing staff and community-led initiatives (e.g., invasive species management and native species planting) would enhance the ecological quality of the woodland over time.

Parking

The existing parking lot has several functional issues, including inadequate vehicular circulation, narrow driveway widths, and insufficient setback from the building. The proposed plan addresses these concerns by increasing the driveway setback along the south side of the building to accommodate a wide sidewalk, realigning the parking entrance with Marvin Street, and adding a second driveway just north of Chadwick Street. A pedestrian route is maintained through the parking lot, connecting the existing bus stop with the proposed park look-off. The plan also expands the parking capacity from 48 spaces to approximately 58 spaces.

Next Steps

The conceptual park plan represents a long-term opportunity to guide activation and redevelopment of the park. In forthcoming budgets, detailed design and site survey work will provide the additional detail and refinement that is necessary to bring the project towards several implementation stages.

A logical time to begin park upgrades, reconfiguration, and improvements is when facilities are to be recapitalized (e.g., playground, pathways, and sport court). An exact timeline for recapitalization has not been set, but facility condition will be monitored by Maintenance Planning Supervisors.

More immediately as an initial phase of implementation, work could proceed in areas not anticipated to be affected by future construction, pending approval of the conceptual park plan. For example, enhancements within the park's wooded areas, such as a new park entrance near Chadwick Street, paved and crusher dust pathways, and nature play features, have been identified as early opportunities for improvement. Local community associations can also play a role in delivering on the park vision by leading trail design and development as outlined through the Recreation Trails Grant Program.

Short-term opportunities for park stewardship may also be explored, particularly through programs that support the removal of invasive species and the planting of native vegetation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If the park concept is approved, it will be used to guide park upgrades that would be brought forward in future business plans and budgets. There is no fixed timeline associated with the plan implementation, as phasing will depend on budget availability and will be prioritized in the same manner as other capital projects. Although it would not be proposed as one capital request, the total estimated cost for improvements over the life of this plan has been estimated in the range of \$3 million. Some of the costs would be expected to replace existing facilities and some of the costs would also result in new facilities and features. Certain costs (e.g., parking lot expansion) may be shared internally and externally to HRM as the investment primarily serves community centre users. These costs will be itemized and assessed as the project advances through design and implementation.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Risks considered include submissions of uncoordinated community proposals and park upgrades over time that do not meet a defined vision for the park.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An in-person public open house was hosted on June 25, 2025, at the North Woodside Community Centre and an online survey ran from June 25 to July 23, 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Harbour East Marine-Drive Community Council could direct changes to the park concept that is presented within this report. This may require additional review and a separate staff report.
2. Harbour East Marine-Drive Community Council could choose not to proceed with the proposed park concept as recommended in this report.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S., 2008, c.39

Purposes of the Municipality

Section 7A: The purposes of the Municipality are to...

- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; ...

Powers of the Municipality regarding property

Section 61(3): The property vested in the Municipality, absolutely or in trust, is under the exclusive management and control of the Council, unless an Act of the Legislature provides otherwise.

Municipal expenditures

Section 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.

Area improvement and promotion

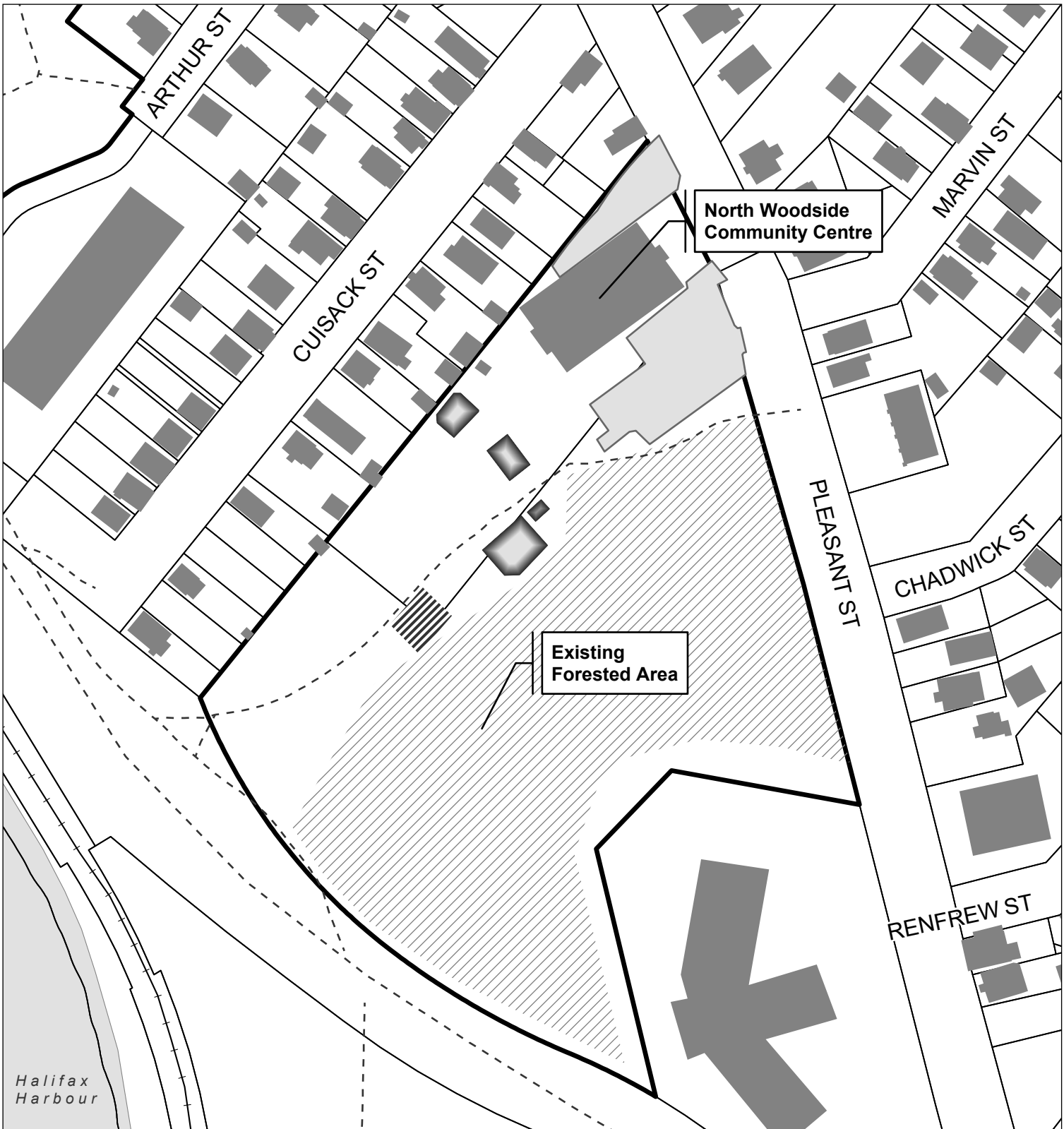
Section 70 (1): The Municipality may (a) beautify, improve, and maintain property owned or leased by the Municipality.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A North Woodside Community Centre Park Context
Attachment B North Woodside Community Centre Park Plan Report

A copy of this report can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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

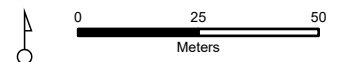


North Woodside Community Centre Park Context

- - - Trail
- +— Railroad
- /// Existing Forested Area
- Playground
- /// Sports Court
- Building
- Parking Lot

HALIFAX

**Parks & Recreation
Strategic Planning & Design**



NORTH WOODSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE PARK

Park Plan Report

November 2025

HALIFAX

Policy & Planning | Parks & Recreation

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Executive Summary

The North Woodside Community Centre Park spans 2.65 hectares (6.5 acres) along Pleasant Street, with direct access to the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail. Anchored by the municipally-owned but community-managed North Woodside Community Centre, the park is the most developed green space on the Dartmouth waterfront and serves as an important community hub offering a mix of recreational and natural features.

In December 2023, the Harbour East–Marine Drive Community Council (HEMDCC) received a joint presentation from the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, the North Woodside Community Centre, and the HomeBridge Youth Society. The presentation outlined community priorities for improving park safety, aesthetics, accessibility, recreation, and environmental stewardship. HEMDCC subsequently requested the preparation of a staff report and a conceptual park plan to guide future improvements.

The resulting conceptual park plan, developed through collaboration with local organizations and informed by public engagement, establishes a shared vision to coordinate park upgrades and long-term investment.

Public engagement included a June 2025 open house attended by approximately 40 residents and an online survey that drew 60 responses. Feedback showed strong overall support for the proposed concept, particularly its balance between developed and natural areas, improved accessibility, and diverse recreational opportunities. Community priorities included the addition of water play features, more parking, washroom access, improved trail safety, shaded gathering spaces, and better recognition of local identity and natural assets.

Informed by public input, the proposed concept plan includes a centralized play area with traditional and nature-based play, an improved play lawn, walking track, and a potential interactive water feature. An expanded accessible trail network would link Pleasant Street to the Harbourfront Trail with improved grades, seating, and lighting. Other proposed features include a fully accessible

look-off, an enhanced wooded area, and a reconfigured parking lot with defined pedestrian entrances.

Overall, the conceptual park plan provides a framework to guide future redevelopment, aligning community aspirations with municipal priorities for an inclusive and enjoyable park space. As voiced by the community, park stewardship will be an important component of this project and can begin in early stages of implementation.

Background

On December 7, 2023, the Harbour East–Marine Drive Community Council (HEMDCC) received a joint presentation from the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, the North Woodside Community Centre, and HomeBridge Youth Society. The groups expressed a collective interest in enhancing the North Woodside Community Centre Park and shared results from a community survey focused on generating ideas, particularly for the underutilized wooded area that occupies more than half of the park site. In response, HEMDCC directed staff to prepare a report and develop a conceptual park plan.

Today, the park consists of two parcels, one formerly part of the North Woodside School grounds dating to the 1930s, and the other, a largely wooded section, acquired from the Province of Nova Scotia in 2004.

This report presents a conceptual plan that has been informed by an analysis of the park, the community, and guiding policy. The plan has been shaped by community engagement to establish a shared vision that will guide future improvements and initiatives in both the short and long term.



Fig. 1 The park’s layout and topography remain largely unchanged since the late 1970s, characterized by sloping grades and limited site development.



Fig. 2 Much like it was nearly 50 years ago, recreation on the site is still centered around playground structures and open lawn.



Fig. 3 North Woodside Community Centre Park is located in District 3 and borders District 5. The 2.65 hectare (ha) park fronts on Pleasant Street and connects to the Harbourfront Trail.

Approach

Park plans are typically prepared when there is a need to resolve functional space challenges and strengthen the park's overall sense of place.

In developing a park plan, recreation and site needs assessments guide the process and include evaluations of:

1. Physical site conditions

The physical conditions of the site are expanded in the Analysis section, but overall there are park challenges in meeting recreation demands given the slope, buried utilities, and the limited availability of cleared open space.

2. Park service delivery

There are no other developed parks with recreation facilities along the Dartmouth Waterfront east of Ferry Terminal Park, which is 2 kilometres away. The North Woodside Community Centre Park presents the best opportunity for a fully activated recreation park in this area. Arnold Whitworth Park does offer basketball and playground play within a 500 m walking distance to the north of the park, but lacks the ability to be expanded.

3. Community demographics

When considering who may be visiting the park, the largest demographic group within the park's and surrounding area's B2Y postal code area is working-age residents (ages 15–64), who make up approximately 67% of the population. Within this group, there is a notable concentration of adults in their late 20s to mid-40s (~32%), likely reflecting a mix of young professionals and early family-stage households. Youth (ages 0–14) represent about 12% of the population, while elevated numbers in the 55–64 age range suggest an aging workforce. Seniors account for a significant share (20%), with a particularly large 65–74 cohort indicating many recently retired residents (Statistics Canada, 2021). Another consideration in understanding park use is the nearby community centre, whose daycare, school-aged programs, and senior-focused activities attract a wide range of visitors. Together, these patterns suggest that the park serves a broad and diverse demographic.

4. Municipal plans and guiding documents

There have been several community and municipal initiatives in recent years that have referenced possible improvements to the park:

- On October 11, 2012, the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee endorsed in principle, a community vision for Woodside. The community vision included actions to encourage connections to the waterfront, improved accessibility, safety, wayfinding, park activation, and park stewardship.
- As part of the “Making Connections: 2014-2019 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan”, the North Woodside Community Centre Park was identified for an active transportation connection from Pleasant Street to the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail.
- The North Woodside Community Centre Park was identified as one of 30 potential naturalization sites in a September 13, 2022, Naturalization Strategy report to Regional Council. The recommendations for the park included the enhancement and implementation of Acadian forest plantings.
- The 2025 Urban Forest Master Plan includes goals for increasing tree canopy cover, improving species diversity, shading recreation facilities, and promoting stewardship, among other initiatives.
- The 2025 municipal Park Lighting Strategy proposes lighting along a pathway within the North Woodside Community Centre Park that connects Pleasant Street and the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail.

3.0

Analysis

The North Woodside Community Centre Park spans 2.65 hectares (ha), fronting Pleasant Street and connecting to the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail. Located in the park's northern corner, the North Woodside Community Centre and its associated parking area occupy approximately 0.32 ha. The facility is municipally owned and operated under the management of the North Woodside Community Association Board.

The park forms part of a network of parkland along the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour and is the most developed of the parks in this area. Its amenities include playgrounds, a half basketball court, an outdoor gym, pathways, a play lawn, wooded and naturalized areas, and benches. A not-for-profit daycare operates out of the Centre and includes a fenced playground for their exclusive use.

The park is characterized by two distinct areas, one side is developed and actively managed, while the other remains largely undeveloped and wooded, comprising slightly more than half of the total park area. The site slopes from northeast to southwest, with an overall grade change of approximately 18 metres between its highest and lowest points, and drainage generally follows this same direction. A seasonal stormwater channel runs through the wooded area, carrying water from Pleasant Street toward the harbour. The developed portion of the park is relatively open and clear, benefiting from westerly sun exposure.

Physical and functional park issues include:

- Unsafe parking lot dimensions and circulation;
- Visual and physical separation of the park, which is set below the parking lot and partially blocked from view;
- Grade transitions that exceed accessible standards;
- Buried sewer lines that intersect the park, limiting the availability of space for formal park facilities; and
- Invasive plant species that have colonized and make park management challenging in certain areas.



Fig. 4 The park offers a southwest-facing vantage point of the Halifax skyline and is a well-established spot for watching boats, fireworks, and sunsets.



Fig. 5 A paved path connects Pleasant Street to the Harbourfront Trail and links to the playground and half basketball court. A large play lawn complements the community centre and supports both programmed and informal activities.



Fig. 6 The centre's parking lot defines much of the park's frontage, with the park itself recessed below.



Fig. 7 The wooded area is a young, even-aged stand of red maple, grey birch, white birch, large-toothed aspen, and red oak. Invasive Japanese knotweed and multiflora rose are beginning to establish, and informal footpaths connect the park to Pleasant Street.

Engagement

In their October 2023 community led survey, the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, the North Woodside Community Centre, and HomeBridge Youth Society sought input and ideas for the North Woodside Community Centre Park, specifically the underused wooded area that occupies more than half of the park parcel. The survey, which had 166 respondents, yielded the following results:

- Most survey respondents are daily or weekly users of the park;
- While most respondents feel safe walking in or near the park during the day, more than half of the survey respondents reported feeling unsafe after dark;
- The top three park concerns among respondents are:
 - The presence of encampments and occasional antisocial behaviour;
 - Inadequate lighting, poor visibility, and overall safety after dark; and
 - The loss of natural spaces within the park;
- The top three desired improvements for the park are the:
 - Development of walking paths;
 - Protection of natural space and vegetation; and
 - Additional of amenities to support park use (e.g. benches, garbage cans).

Building on community-led engagement, Parks and Recreation staff launched an engagement program in 2025 to validate assumptions and present the first iteration of a park concept.

2025 Project Engagement

Public Open House, June 25, 2025

At the public open house, approximately 40 residents attended and provided input on the North Woodside Community Centre Park concept plan. Parking emerged as the most frequent concern, with participants noting that existing parking is already at capacity, particularly during events and daycare pick-up and drop-off times. Residents also expressed strong interest in adding

water play opportunities, better separating cyclists from pedestrians on narrow pathways while maintaining trail connectivity, and including amenities such as seating, power connections, washroom access, and shade to support community programming and events. Participants emphasized the importance of personalizing the park to reflect local history and identity, protecting and enhancing natural areas, and accommodating users of all ages and abilities. Other suggestions included the planting of trees, stabilizing ditch embankments, showcasing community pride through painted sport courts or collaborative student projects, adding benches, lighting, and garbage cans, providing a waterfront viewing area, and posting clear rules for dogs.

Online Survey, June 25 to July 23, 2025

A total of 60 residents completed the online public survey, with about 85% responding on behalf of their households (average size 2.78 people). Project awareness extended further, with 800 participants visiting the project website and 170 downloading the proposed park concept. Most respondents (69%) live within the immediate community, with the remainder primarily from nearby Dartmouth neighbourhoods.

Overall, survey feedback showed strong support for the proposed park concept, with 84% of respondents satisfied and 74% agreeing it balanced developed parkland and natural woodland. Most felt the mix of structured and unstructured recreation was appropriate, though some wanted more formal facilities (21%) or more passive space (13.5%). A majority (64%) agreed the plan allows for future growth and park use, though opinions were divided on whether wooded areas should be used for parking or recreation, with nearly half supporting such use and 40% preferring preservation. Accessibility was generally viewed positively, with 57% agreeing the plan addresses access needs, though some respondents were unsure due to the limited presentation of grading details. Two-thirds of respondents said the changes would increase their park use. The most common suggestions for improvement were the addition of a water or splash feature, more parking, washroom access, safer and better-defined entrances, activation of the wooded area, a dog off-leash area, and additional sport courts.

5.0

Concept

The proposed long-term changes to the park are described in the four categories below:

1. Centralized play area

When the existing playground is due for recapitalization, a reconfigured, centralized play area is envisioned to bring play elements closer together and connecting them with paved pathways. The plan incorporates both traditional play structures and natural play features, offering a wide variety of experiences. An improved play lawn, encircled by a walking track, would support in-park exercise and provide a safe space for walking and rolling. A small interactive water feature is proposed in the park's center.

2. Trail connectivity & accessibility

The plan includes a paved pathway network that connects facilities and improves access to the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail. A wide paved route is proposed to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. Secondary trails through the wooded areas would be designed to maximize drainage and maintain a natural aesthetic. Accessibility improvements include reducing grades where possible, adding seating throughout, and creating an accessible park look-off adjacent to the parking lot. Lighting is proposed to enhance visibility after dark.

3. Preserved & enhanced natural space

The concept represents a compromise between preserving natural space and accommodating developed uses. Although a portion of the wooded area is proposed for parking and a sport court, 1.25 hectares (3.1 acres) of woodland are retained, with improved access. It is recommended that invasive species removal and native species planting be regular initiatives in this area.

4. Parking

The existing parking lot has challenges, including inadequate vehicular circulation, narrow driveway widths, and insufficient setback from the building. The plan proposes a setback along the south side of the building to accommodate a wide sidewalk, a realigned parking entrance with Marvin Street, and an additional driveway just north of Chadwick Street. A pedestrian

route is maintained through the parking lot, connecting the existing bus stop with the proposed park look-off. The plan also expands the parking capacity from 48 spaces to approximately 58 spaces.



Fig. 8 An accessible feature of the concept is a skyline and park viewing area, easily reached from the parking lot.



Fig. 9 The proposed pathway network provides connections between all park facilities, circles the lawn, and links to the reconfigured parking lot.



Conclusion

The conceptual park plan provides a framework to guide the park's activation and phased redevelopment over time. In future municipal budgets, detailed design and site survey work will offer the refinement needed to advance the project through successive stages of implementation.

A practical point to initiate upgrades will be during the recapitalization of existing facilities such as the playground, pathways, and sport court. While no specific timeline for recapitalization has been established, facility conditions will continue to be monitored by Parks Maintenance Planning Supervisors.

In the short to medium term, implementation could focus on areas unlikely to be affected by future construction. Potential actions include improvements in the park's wooded sections, such as creating a new entrance near Chadwick Street, and introducing nature play features. Local community associations can also play a role in delivering on the park vision by leading pathway design and implementation as outlined through the Recreation Trails Grant Program.

Short-term opportunities for park stewardship, coordinated through HRM staff and community members, could also be pursued. These might include programs and events aimed at removing invasive plant species and planting native vegetation.

APPENDIX

What We Heard Summary

Summer 2025

What We Heard

North Woodside Community Centre Park

Building on the work initiated by the Pleasant Woodside Neighbourhood Association, North Woodside Community Centre, and HomeBridge Youth Society, a public engagement program was launched in the summer of 2025 for the development of the North Woodside Community Centre Park.

As part of this process, several visuals and descriptions were shared to show how earlier community feedback had been incorporated into the development of a park concept. The materials also highlighted proposed improvements with a focus on enhancing user experience, accessibility, aesthetics, and safety, while preserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Below are a sample of the visuals presented to the community:

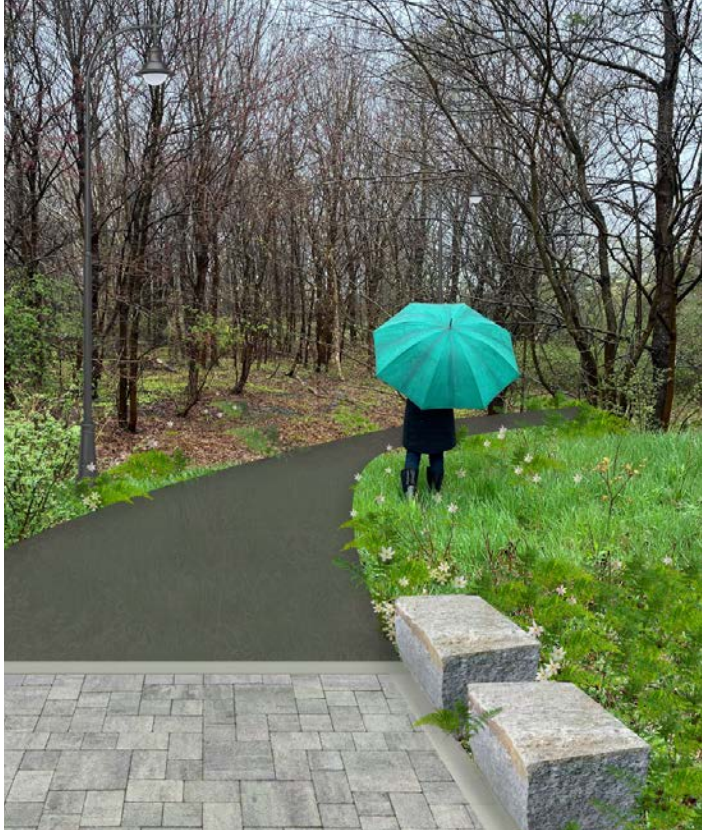


Figure 1: New defined entrances with clear access, lighting, seating, and landscaping.



Figure 2: Proposed upgrades would better meet accessibility standards.

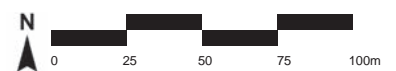


Figure 3: Aerial view of the North Woodside Community Centre Park concept as presented in June 2025.

Public Open House- June 25, 2025



Figure 4: A sample of the project and event promotion.

A public open house was held on June 25, 2025, with approximately 40 residents attending and providing feedback on the park concept plan.

Written and verbal feedback collected at the open house is summarized below:

Increase the amount of parking

Throughout the evening, conversations about parking dominated. The existing parking is already at capacity for uses within the Centre. While most park users were not personally affected, they noted that regular Centre users often struggle to find parking, particularly during events and for daycare pick-up and drop-off.

Provide access to water play

With few opportunities for water play in the surrounding community, participants suggested that a water feature would be beneficial for both children and adults, especially during hot weather.

Better separate people & bikes

Several conversations focused on the presence of bikes within the park. Some users preferred

that bikes not be allowed, given the narrow path widths and the presence of children at play. Others emphasized that the pathway connection to the Harbourfront Trail is essential and should be preserved and promoted.

Include supportive amenities for programming & events

Community members shared experiences of how the park is currently used during events and highlighted the need for changes that better support programming. Suggestions included seating, power connections, washroom access, and shaded areas.

Design a personalized approach

Residents expressed the importance of personalizing the park concept to reflect local history and community identity. Ideas included working with residents on plan implementation, engaging “Free Lab” students in developing park structures, and enhancing spaces such as painted sport courts to showcase community pride.

Protect & Enhance the Natural Environment

Participants emphasized the importance of protecting and enhancing the site’s natural features. While there was recognition that some portions of the wooded area may need to be used for recreation, residents stressed that the natural value of the site should not be lost. Suggestions included replanting new trees and stabilizing the drainage ditch embankments.

Other comments included:

- Accommodate all ages and abilities within the playground.
- Include details like benches, lighting and garbage cans.
- Provide a viewing area with seating closer to the waterfront.
- Post clear rules about dogs within the park.

Online Survey- June 25 - July 23, 2025

In total, 60 residents completed the online public survey that was available between June 25 and July 23, 2025. However, the reach of the survey, and the potential impact of park changes, extends beyond those who completed it. Approximately 85% of respondents indicated they were completing the survey on behalf of their household, with the average household size reported as 2.78 people.

In terms of project awareness, 800 participants visited at least one page of the project website, and 170 people downloaded the proposed park concept from the Shape Your City platform.

Most survey respondents (69%) live within the same community as the North Woodside Community Centre Park, with others residing in nearby communities, primarily on the Dartmouth side of the Harbour (Figure 5).

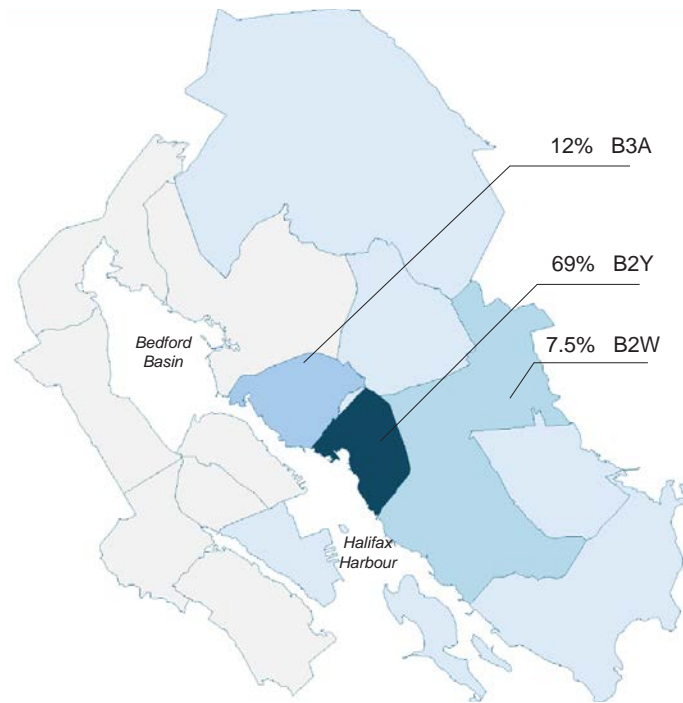


Figure 5: Respondent household location by postal code.

As a first impression of the proposed park concept, respondents were asked about their overall level of satisfaction. The concept was well received, with 62% indicating they were satisfied and 22% indicating they were very satisfied (Figure 6).

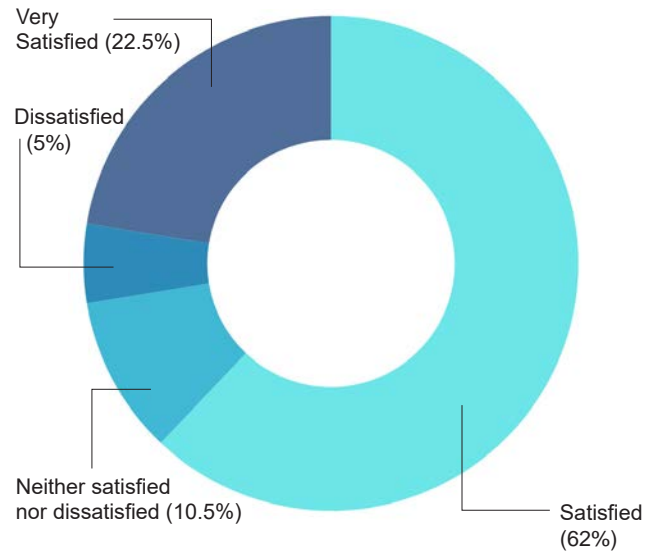


Figure 6: Overall survey respondent satisfaction.

The majority of respondents (74%) felt that the concept achieved a good balance between developed parkland and natural woodland. Among those seeking more site development, 14% felt the park was too natural (Figure 7).

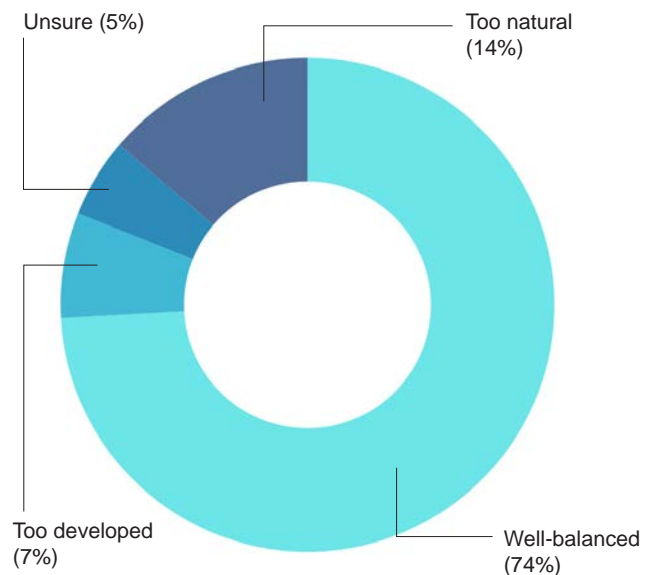


Figure 7: Respondent response on balance of developed park to natural woodland.

When asked about the balance of recreation within the park, more than half of survey respondents (57%) felt that the concept presented a well-balanced mix of structured and unstructured uses. Notably, 21% of respondents felt the concept should include more structured uses, suggesting there was too much unstructured space. Conversely, 13.5% of respondents indicated that there was too much emphasis on formal recreation and that more space should be available for passive use (Figure 8).

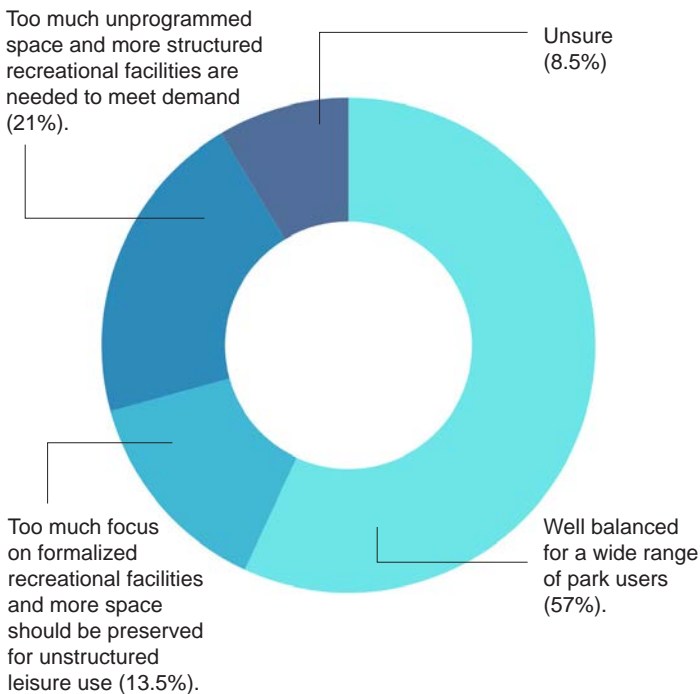


Figure 8: Respondent response on balance of formal recreation facilities to unstructured park uses.

Thinking about long-term park planning, survey respondents were asked whether the concept plan provides sufficient direction and recreational opportunities to accommodate increased park use over time. Most respondents (64%) agreed that the plan does allow for future neighbourhood growth and increased park use, while 21% did not feel this was the case. Another 15% of respondents were unsure (Figure 9).

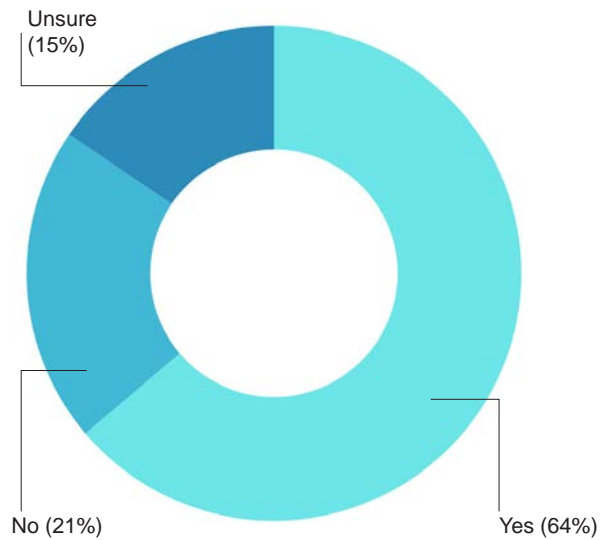


Figure 9: Respondent response on balance of formal recreation facilities to unstructured park uses.

If more space were needed within the park to accommodate future use from community growth, respondents were asked whether a portion of the wooded area should be used for parking or recreational facilities. Almost half indicated that the wooded area would be a suitable location for additional parking or expanded park facilities. However, approximately 40% of respondents preferred that the wooded area be preserved and not removed for additional uses (Figure 10).

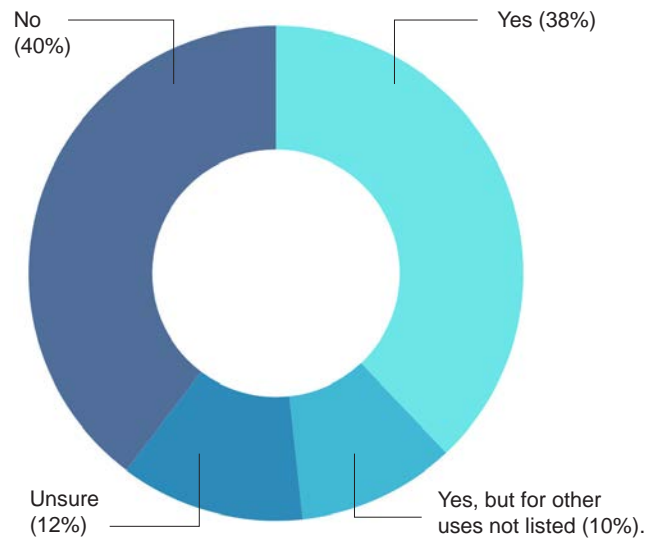


Figure 10: Respondent response on the future use of the wooded area.

Approximately one in four respondents identified as having a disability. When asked about the accessibility of the park concept, respondents generally felt that the proposal adequately considers access needs for people of all ages and abilities. Nearly 57% agreed that the plan integrates accessibility into the design, while 14% did not believe it would improve accessibility. About 29% of respondents were unsure, which may be due to the concept not including details such as grading information or the location of resting and seating areas (Figure 11).

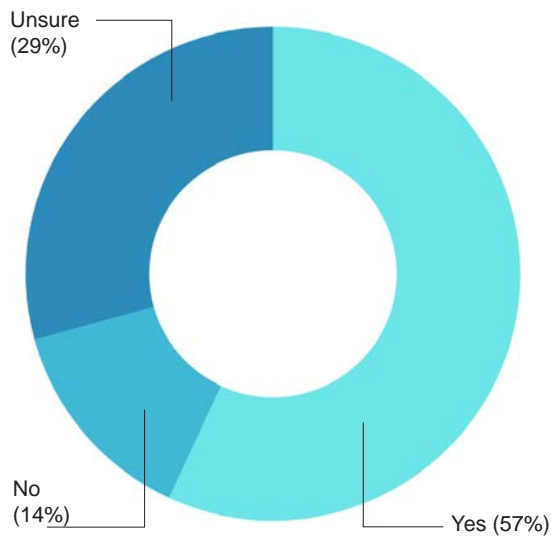


Figure 11: Respondent response on the overall accessibility integrated into the park concept.

Given that the proposed park concept changes the access and layout of park components, respondents were asked whether their use of the park would change if the proposed modifications were implemented. Almost 21% indicated their use of the park would not change, while just over 67% believed their use would change. The remainder of respondents were unsure (Figure 12).

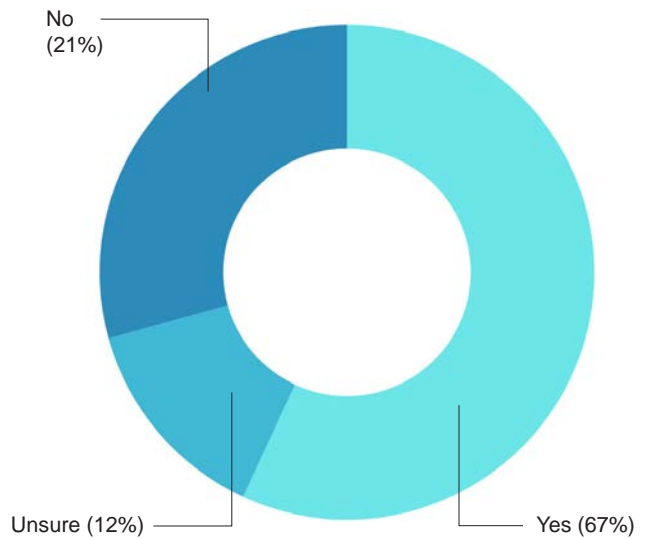


Figure 12: Respondent response on perceived change to park use if proposed changes were implemented.

As an open-ended question, respondents were asked what changes they would make to the park concept if given the opportunity. Overall, this response field was used to validate the concept, but the most frequently requested addition was a water or splash feature for the neighbourhood, given the limited opportunities for access to water-based recreation. In order of frequency, other suggestions included additional parking for the community centre, access to washrooms, more activation of the wooded area, better-defined and safer park entrances, a dog off-leash area, and more sport courts.