Peace & Friendship Park

‘What We Heard’ Summary, September 2024

To continue the work initiated by the Task Force and Regional Council, subtle yet meaningful changes are planned for Peace and Friendship Park. A ‘Shape Your City Halifax’ survey was conducted from August 8 to September 16, 2024, to gather residents’ ideas for park improvements. The project page received a total of 1,500 visits, and 176 surveys were submitted.

Park Planning Themes

Four park planning themes were presented, all aimed at fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. The themes were:

- **Inclusivity**. An inclusive park is one that is safe, secure, and welcoming for all users
- **Reconciliation**. There is an idea of peace, friendship, and reconciliation in this space. Reconciliation is an ongoing discussion that is best had in a shared space.
- **Connection with Nature**. Reconnecting with nature offers opportunities for learning and understanding our place in the world.
- **A Place of Expression**. A democratic and welcoming space is one that allow for the display of speech, culture, and identity.

These themes resonated with a majority of respondent with 84% indicating that they provide suitable direction for the park.

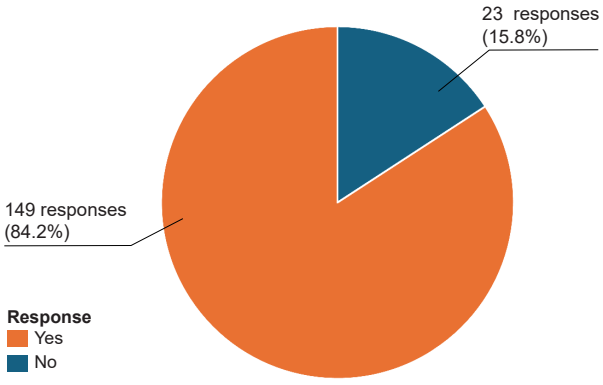

Figure 1: Survey respondent reaction to the appropriateness of park planning themes to guide park improvements.

Respondents who agreed that the themes were suitable direction provided further explanations:

- “I think these are appropriate goals for any park. I feel particularly strongly about reconciliation being a key objective for this park. I would like to see a learning component integrated into reconciliation efforts. We cannot improve until we better understand.”
- “These four themes are pillars of any positive aspect of society—especially when redesigning natural (green) spaces to promote free expression and increase inclusivity through reconciliation.”

Those who felt the themes were not suitable explained that they found the park’s themes to be either too political, too leading, or irrelevant given other municipal priorities.

When asked about potential additions or changes to the park themes, several suggestions were offered, including:

- “I think it’s missing ‘fun’ and ‘safe’ — probably the main reason we go there is for kids to have fun...”
- “I would include something about the roles of shared green space in offering places of rest for those experiencing troubled times...”
- “I think accessibility standards should also apply to any stage, performance space, playground, etc.”

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Park Vision

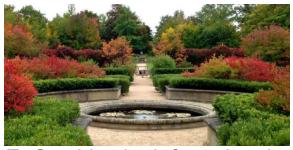
Five images were presented in the survey to capture respondents’ vision for the future park.

A: Retain the current park theme and level of landscape finish.

B: Replace the straight formal crossing pathways in favour of a meandering pathway layout.

C: Plan for more developed social and gathering opportunities.

D: Introduce naturalized landscape elements to replace formal Victorian inspired annual plantings.



E: Combine both formal and informal design features to balance the current form with a natural feel.

Figure 2: Visual representations for a future park vision.

When asked to rank overall park vision options, the following was noted:

- 58% of respondents definitely or somewhat agree that the current park theme and level of finish should not be retained.
- Approximately half of respondents definitely or somewhat agree that straight, formal pathways could take on a more meandering form.
- A more decisive 74% of respondents want to see more social and gathering spaces.
- 66% of respondents would like to see more naturalized landscape elements introduced into the park.
- 64% of respondents would like a blend of formal and informal design elements included in the park plan.

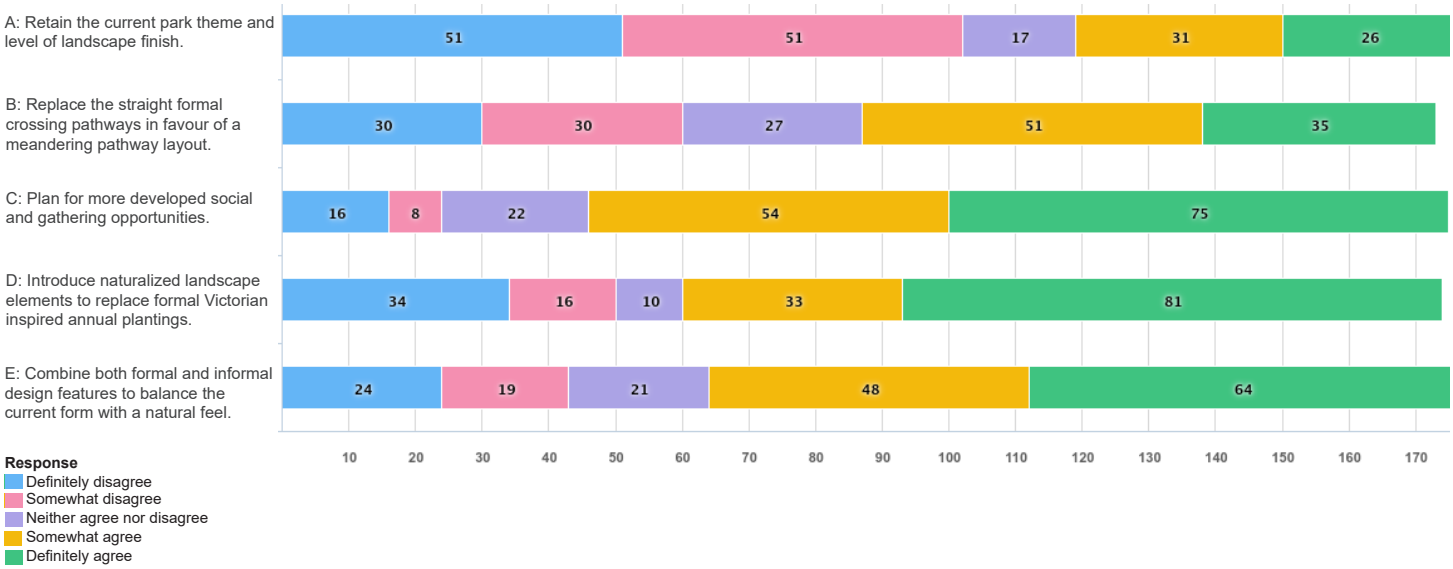


Figure 3: Survey respondent preference for overall park vision.

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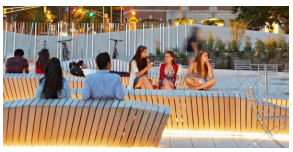
Park Centre Function

Seven images were presented in the survey to help determine the focus for the future centre of the park.

A. Moveable furniture



B. Inward facing conversational & discussion space

C. Outward directed seating to view the park

D. A place to experience public art

E. An open space that can be used for performances and events

F. Passive leisure space designed for relaxation and enjoyment

G. Creative lighting that highlights important decorative elements and allows for better evening use

Figure 4: Visual options for respondents to rank the focus of the future centralized space.

When asked to rank the focus of the park’s future center, the following results emerged:

- 52% of respondents were somewhat or definitely disinterested in moveable furniture as the focal point, while 33% were somewhat or definitely interested.
- Inward-facing conversational seating was favored by 60% of respondents.
- Outward-facing seating for people-watching was preferred by 69%.
- 68% of respondents were somewhat or definitely interested in a park center that integrates public art into the overall experience.
- Similarly, 68% were somewhat or definitely interested in a park center that could accommodate events and performances.
- A significant 91% of respondents were somewhat or definitely interested in a park center designed for passive leisure, relaxation, and enjoyment.
- To extend park use into the evening, approximately 79% of respondents were somewhat or definitely interested in creative lighting to enhance the space.

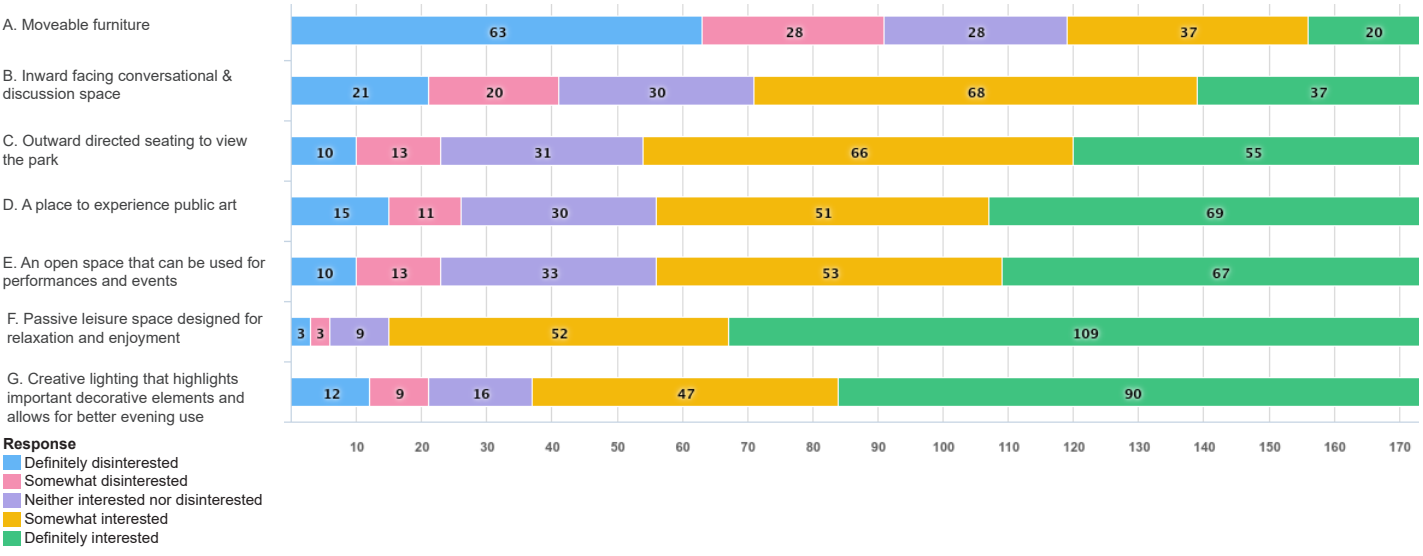


Figure 5: Survey respondent preference for the finish of the park centre.

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Park Programming

Park programming can enhance the experience of a place and convey a specific story. Questions were posed to respondents to better understand their preferences for how a redesigned space might be used.

When asked about how the park should be activated or scheduled, the following was noted:

- 40% of respondents would like to see more opportunities for scheduled events and performances within the park. In contrast, 34% prefer the current level of scheduling, while 26% would like the space to be used organically without scheduled events and performances.

Some respondents expanded on their selections:

- “More opportunities for community members to make use of the space, and more events for us to attend would be a way to increase engagement with it.”
- “Halifax already has many activities. I prefer a space to enjoy nature that is always available.”
- “A precedent for a flexible and adaptive public space like Unions Square Park in New York should be considered. Spontaneous congregation and flexible spaces are a must.”

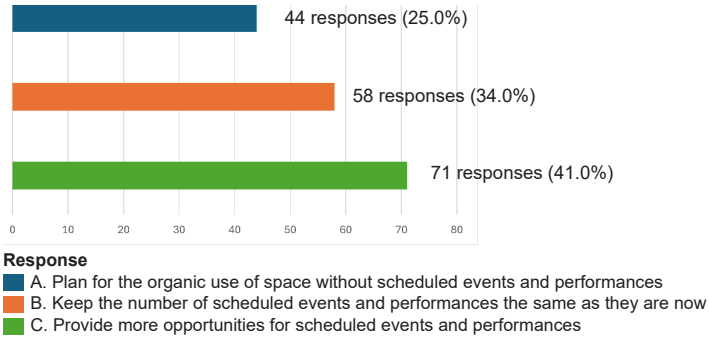

Figure 6: Survey responses for how the park should be activated.

When asked if changes to the park could make events and performances more comfortable, preferences were not overwhelmingly clear: 58% of respondents said ‘yes,’ while 42% said ‘no.’ Suggested improvements included seating, shade, a stage, washrooms, electrical connections, and water access.

Regarding how the park’s story should be conveyed, just over 27% of respondents felt that interpretation was not necessary. Approximately 33% would like to see the story told through signage with text and images, while about 39% preferred a story integrated into the landscape and public art.

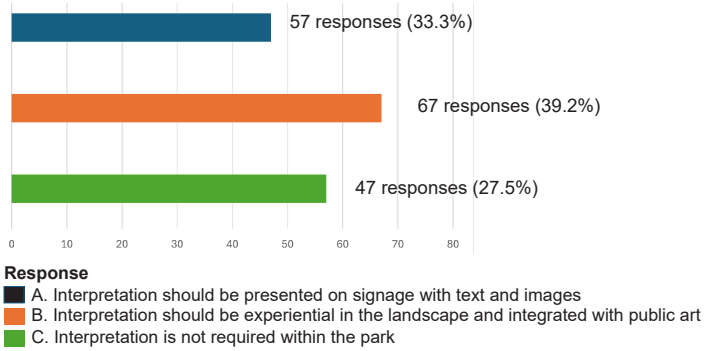

Figure 7: Survey responses for how the park should be interpreted.

Respondents were asked if there is a particular story that should be told in the park. Responses were mixed, with some suggesting specific stories and others not seeing the need for a particular narrative. Suggested stories included the presence of the Mi’kmaq people in the area before settlement, the impacts of colonization, the history of Peace and Friendship Treaties, and the ongoing process of reconciliation. Several respondents indicated that they did not feel qualified to answer this question and recommended that follow-up be conducted with Indigenous communities.