

Needham Recreation Centre

Approx. 15 People in Attendance

The purpose of the meeting was to share information on what improvements have taken place at the park since the community meeting in February 2013, to provide an update on the organizing effort for the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Halifax Explosion in 2017, to receive feedback on maintenance, short term and long term projects, and to outline how residents can be involved in the planning process for the park in the future.

There was a short update on the improvements to date which for the most part were related to maintenance: additional garbage cans, trail improvement off Novalea, addition of portapottie during summer, plaque replacement, brush clearing, etc. Long term planning did not advance since it became clear that with the upcoming 100th anniversary commemoration that a more comprehensive planning process was needed for the park and staff are now suggesting that a master plan be developed so that there is a coordinated process for improvements to the park that respect the many aspects: historical, commemorative, recreational, open space, natural area, etc.

There will be two public planning processes that will affect the park over the next couple of years:

- 1) An advisory committee is being formed to provide input into the development and implementation of a municipal Halifax Explosion 100th Anniversary Commemoration Plan 2017. The plan includes three programming streams:

- a. Municipal capital projects specific to the Halifax Explosion centennial
- b. Civic commemorative event(s)
- c. Municipal grants to registered non-profit organizations.

It is anticipated that there will also be subcommittees that will work on the 3 areas outlined and the municipal capital projects stream will be the one that will develop legacy project(s) for Ft Needham Park. For more information on this process please see the staff report:

<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/131210ca11110.pdf> The advisory committee will be created through the public appointment process of council so please make sure you are on District 8 email list to receive notices of application deadlines.

- 2) The development of a master plan for the park would look at all aspects of the park and develop a plan that takes into consideration public feedback and coordinates potential projects. A consultant would be hired to facilitate public involvement and develop the plan. HRM is interested in advancing this planning before 2017 so that any legacy projects for the park for the commemoration are in place prior to Dec. 2017 and are integrated into the overall plan. The master plan process would start in 2014. Public meetings about the master plan will be advertised on District 8 email list.

Participants were again asked to work in small groups to identify maintenance issues, short term projects, long term projects and questions. Staff and the master plan consultant will review the issues identified and develop a work plan.

Maintenance

2013 comments:

- Drainage
- Brush/tree thinning
- Better trail development/fix erosion

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- Lighting
- Better off leash dog signage
- More garbage cans
- Picnic tables
- Fix plaques
- Take better care of monuments (several)
- What are the themes? Unstructured play / Needham Ctr as a resource and redevelopment with Devonshire

2014 comments:

- Explosion plaques need to be taken care of
- Wooden screen for porta-potty – move closer to equipment shed (e.g. a la Point Pleasant for esthetics)
- Signage (not sure if this will help?) “Children breathe this air” or “People are here to get fresh air” or “Kindly turn off your engines. Thank you.” At the look off (parking lot)
- The old gnarled Beech trees that you can climb on/in are wonderful – is there a replacement plan for them if any get sick/die? (i.e. start growing new climbing trees close by)

Short-Term Projects

2013 comments:

- More trees for shade in play areas
- Play area for older kids
- Edible plants/community garden/orchard
- Natural play area
- Family area
- Community art/storytelling area
- Outdoor oven
- Bandstand
- Original fort – recognize
- History/signage
- Water-based playground
- Staircase from Union
- Remove backstop
- Add matching goal posts
- Extend trail on west side of tennis courts

2014 Comments:

- Entrance
- Master plan
- Argos football should be consulted re field. Rugby teams looking for a home base
- Tennis courts may not be right for the park (+ 2). Tennis courts – fenced in area can be multipurpose (maybe make it nicer for multi-use), seen it used for problem dogs (to run free), women with lots of kids to manage, people wanting privacy (e.g. Taichi)
- Ball field – not used; football – used a lot; ultimate soccer – look at stats of use of field and design accordingly (+ 2) is back fence to old baseball diamond still there? If so, get rid of it?
- Improve sports area – artificial surface for sports field, lighting (to use park a lot more)
- stronger light here
- Skating rink

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- Wilderness trail around park for mountain biking path
- Meandering paths in orchard on west hill
- Continue the path around the sportfield
- “brush clearing” vs. naturalized environment @north end of park
- Actively stewarding the natural environment (just like orchards plan?) – make it look like St. Stephen’s school natural area? i.e. nice, but still wild
- Keep it wild
- Wildflowers on west slope – bunch of colours, different things for each season
- Concern about over-filling space with monuments... (space-saving/space-smart design?)
- Wheel chair accessible parking
- Year-round garbage cans
- Old Richmond Street – do we need stairs? Vs. fitness activities and kids enjoyment of steep gravelled hill. Can we have both?
- Lighting old Richmond street on to Union and stairs
- Nice seating area - with trellis and grapes (like waterfront near NS Power bldg.)

Long-Term Projects

2013 comments:

- Community food forest
- Public art for James Cook
- Garden area in former rose garden
- Better signage
- Washroom
- Urban farm
- More trees
- Make wheelchair accessible
- Remove Japanese knotwood
- Clean up northern parking lot view (place to watch harbour/fireworks)

2014 Comments:

- Storytelling (in the woods)
- Trails on the west side of the park (clearing to be walkable again)
- Plaques set up throughout the trails with history facts. Times, names, Boston process
- Improve link between Needham Centre and Union St parking lot
- Washrooms – yes, please (near Needham St/football storage)
- Orchard
- Garden + original monument
- What is the story of the bells? (some from churches?) destroyed by Explosion?
- Running walking path around the park
- Wetland? With cat tails etc. (to collect drainage water?) Frogs and salamanders! Skating in winter?
- Viewplane opened up
- Washrooms and canteen
- More parking wider road – on north side of Union Street
- Community garden
- Accessibility – could grade from Novalea for wheelchairs

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- Only easy access is at end of Needham Street (awkward)
- Rain gardens – swales with native plants
- Orchard and edible wild
- Windbreak along west side, esp if orchard is built
- Well used sports field – is ball diamond going to be removed? Increase field
- Do not lose open space
- Sports court – tennis/basketball

General Comments:

- North End Community Circle – looking for land for a community garden in the area
- Need signs for what park is about
- Used in winter – skis, toboggans
- Signage – hard to find (needs entrance sign)
- Bring forward history formally and informally – use of mobile app?
- Good starting point
- Not everything will be complete in 2017, general direction over time
- Halifax Explosion – memory is strongest here; 100th anniversary – with fewer survivors there is a shift from living representation to history
- Need to look at future of whole area – park, Needham Centre and Devonshire rink because rink will close – what will future opportunity be for area?
- Opportunity for engagement
- Philosophy in rec – look at play vs. programming