

Survey Summary Report

Halifax Common Master Plan

PUBLIC CONSULTATION & REVIEW

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1.0 Introduction

As part of the public consultation for the Halifax Common Master Plan Review, an online survey was available on the Shape Your City website from May 31, 2022, to February 28, 2023. This survey was to capture feedback from the public for the review of the completed Master Plan and to obtain input into the development of the Implementation Plan. The survey was open for nine months to allow enough time for people to review the report documents.

The survey was organized into three sections:

- The General Comments section was an open questionnaire for respondents to share comments on any topic about the Halifax Common or the Master Plan itself.
- The Detailed Feedback section was a post-project evaluation questionnaire designed to gather feedback from respondents on the completed Halifax Common Master Plan.
- The Implementation Priorities section was an exploratory questionnaire to gauge respondent's opinions and priorities with respect to the implementation of the various actions and projects presented in the Master Plan.

The survey was composed of the following types of questions:

- Radio button questions to select a single option.
- Checkbox questions to select several options, in no particular order (e.g., "Choose a maximum of 5").
- Rank questions to categorize the relative importance of projects or initiatives.
- Open-ended essay questions.

All the questions were voluntary meaning that respondents could choose to leave questions blank.

The questions that were open-ended responses were analyzed using a qualitative approach. Staff used content analysis to examine these responses, using an inductive approach to coding. This involved reading through the data, taking note of themes which repeated themselves across multiple responses, and tallying how many responses touched on each of the themes identified. This is a method of quantifying qualitative data and identifying patterns in free-text responses.

Throughout this document, the sample size (number of people who responded to the question) is indicated between brackets, for example (n=100) means there were 100 responses to that question.

Since this was a voluntary survey, the sample of respondents is not necessarily representative of the population of the Halifax Regional Municipality. Voluntary sampling bias is a likely issue, meaning that those who feel strongly about a topic are more likely to respond to the survey. The results should be interpreted as an exploratory study, rather than a poll, allowing staff to get a sense of opinions, priorities, and concerns on the Halifax Common-related topics.

2.0 Who Participated

The survey received 381 submissions. There was good participation from the public in general during the first two months the survey was open. The skateboarding community made a strong showing in participation in July. In February, the Halifax Lancers community participated in large numbers. Three out of ten people who participated in the survey self identified as having an affiliation with the skatepark (116), and about one in five participants were affiliated with the Halifax Lancers (73).

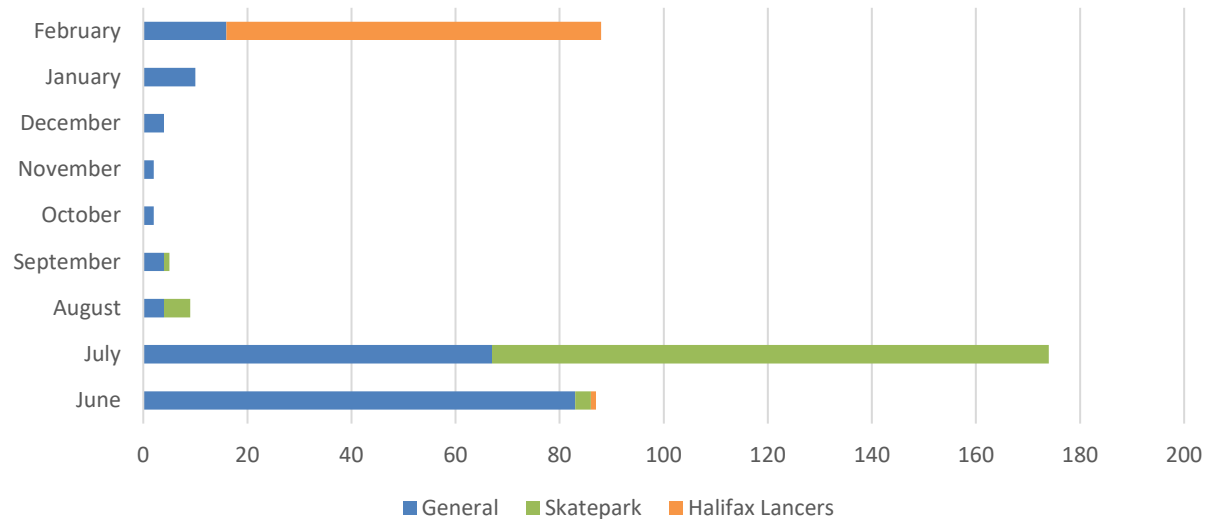


Figure 1: Number of Submissions per Month Graph

Age

There was a good cross section from different age groups with the 25 to 34 cohort being the largest group at 25%. Youth (17 or younger) represented 4.5% of respondents and people 65 or older represented 10% of respondents.

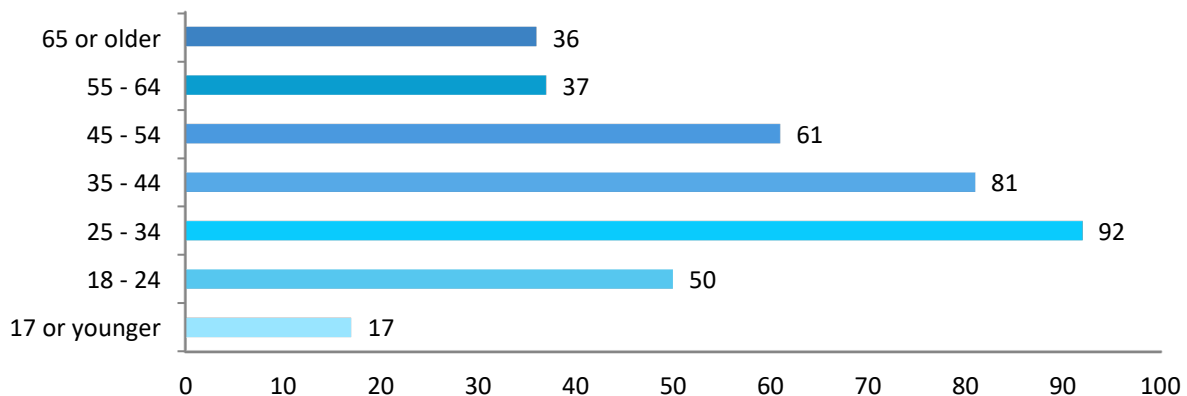


Figure 2: Age Cohorts Graph

Home Location

Most of the survey participants were from the Halifax Peninsula area making up 59% of respondents.

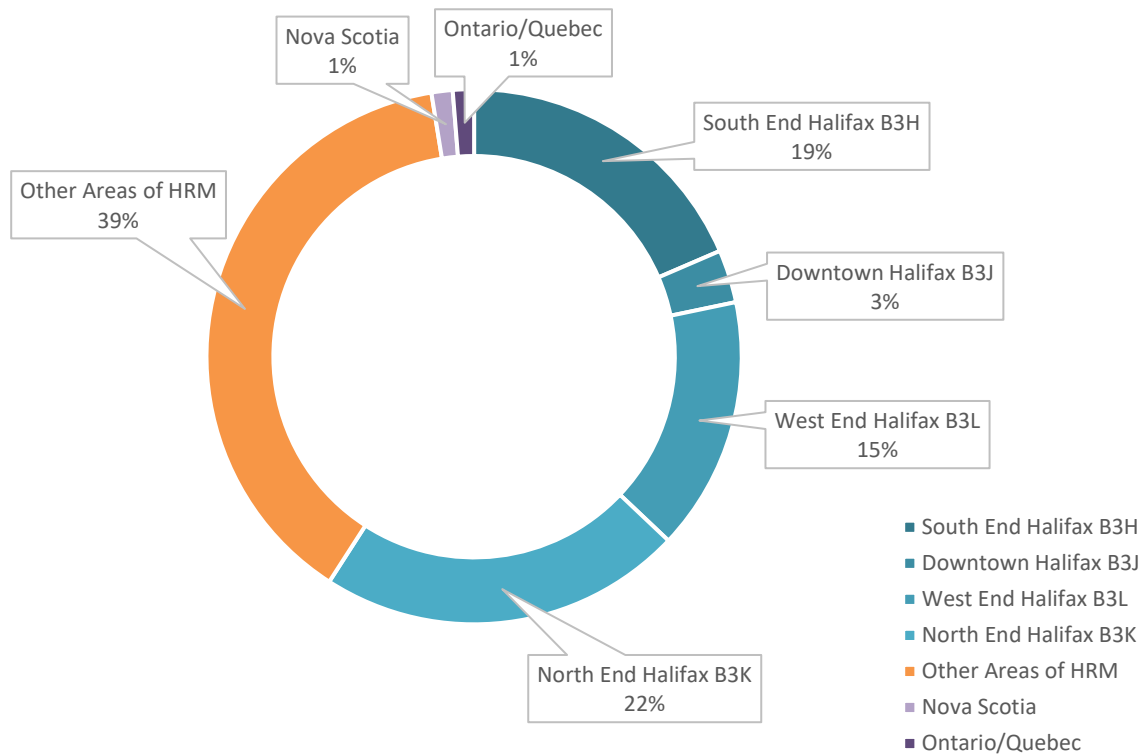


Figure 3: Postal Code Areas Graph

Diversity and Inclusion

Of the participants who self identified:

- 11.8% identified as a person with a disability
- 4.4% identified as an Indigenous person
- 2.5% identified as an African Nova Scotian person

Affiliations with Groups, Associations, and Institutions

Participants were asked about any affiliations they may have with groups, associations, or institutions related to the Halifax Common. These questions were voluntary, meaning that respondents could choose to leave the questions blank.

Groups that use the recreation facilities on the Halifax Common	Institutions within or near the Halifax Common	Advocacy or community groups, or associations
Skatepark (116)	Dalhousie University (40)	Ecology Action Centre (19)
Halifax Lancers (73)	Nova Scotia Health Authority (17)	Friends of the Halifax Common (16)
Skating oval (23)	Citadel High School (12)	Halifax Cycling Coalition (15)
Ballfields (17)	IWK Health Centre (10)	North End Business Association (3)
Sport fields (16)	Citadel Community Centre (3)	Friends of the Public Gardens (1)
The Pavilion, Central Common (12)	Parks Canada (2)	North British Society (1)
Tennis courts (11)	Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History (2)	Common Roots Urban Farm (1)
Halifax Wanderers Football Club (6)	Saint Mary's University (2)	The Pavilion Youth Association (1)
Cricket field (4)	Power House Youth Centre (1)	
Halifax Lawn Bowling Club (3)	All Saints Cathedral (1)	

Table 1: Affiliations

3.0 General Comments

In this section of the survey, participants were given an opportunity to provide general comments on any topic pertaining to the Halifax Common or Master Plan.

3.1 Responses for General Comments Question

Question: Please share your comment about the Halifax Common Master Plan or open space use on the Halifax Common. (36)

This was an optional essay question with 36 responses. Some respondents commented on more than one topic. Recurring topic themes were as follows:

- A desire for improvements to the skatepark (11)
- Support for having more unstructured recreation (6)
- Concerns about the recent parking garage and loss of greenspace (4)

- Design related comments (4)
- Support for a stadium at the Wanderers grounds (3)
- Opposition for a stadium at the Wanderers grounds (3)
- Suggestions for other recreation uses (3)
- General thanks and support for the Master Plan (3)
- Advocacy for keeping the Common for public space and not leasing or selling for private uses. (2)

Single topic themes were as follows:

- Safety for transgendered females (1)
- Maintaining vehicle access on streets (1)
- Environmental sustainability (1)
- Sentiment against developers (1)

4.0 Detailed Feedback

In this section of the survey, participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback on specific sections of the Master Plan. Participants chose which sections they wished to provide comments. Some participants provided comments for multiple sections.

4.1 Responses for Detailed Feedback Question

Question: Please select the section of the Master Plan you wish to provide feedback. A separate comment box will appear below for each section selected. (120)

This was an optional essay question with 120 responses on 11 specific sections of the Master Plan. Not all comments related directly to the section topic. The remaining 10 sections of the Master Plan did not receive any comments.

There was little constructive criticism or negative feedback received for revising the Halifax Common Master Plan. A large percentage of the respondents for this section identified as having an affiliation with either the Halifax Lancers or the skatepark and used the survey to advocate for expansion or improvements to their respective facilities.

The following sections of the Master Plan received comments:

Section	Topic Themes
Vision Goals	Improvements to skatepark (1)
4.1 The Halifax Common District and Land Use Character Areas	Improvements to skatepark (5)
4.6 Recreation, Programming and Events	Improvements to skatepark (7) Support for use of the Common for recreation activities (1) Retrofit some tennis courts for pickleball (1)
4.7 Environmental Design	Improvements to skatepark (1)
4.9 Governance and Partnerships	Role for recreation clubs and groups (1)
5.1 North Common and Central Common	Improvements to skatepark (9) Keep open space as it is currently (2) Retrofit some tennis courts for pickleball (1)
5.2 Summer Street and University Avenue Green Corridors	Advocacy for Halifax Lancers' growth and site expansion (1)
5.4 Wanderers Grounds Site	Advocacy for Halifax Lancers' growth and site expansion (79) Advocacy for stadium (3)
5.6 Halifax Public Gardens	Plant more lupins (1)
5.7 Victoria Park	Advocacy for Summer food festival (1)
Any other section of the Master Plan	Improvements to skatepark (5)

Table 2: Comments on Master Plan

5.0 Implementation Priorities

This section of the survey included 3 questions related to priorities for implementing the various actions and projects presented in the Master Plan. The first question of this section was a Rank question of five projects preselected by Staff based on an assessment of asset condition urgency for recapitalization (Skatepark, Sportfield on the Central Common, and Camp Hill Cemetery); or the coordination with Active Transportation projects with planning already underway (the Midtown AAA Bikeway Connections project, and the University Avenue - Peninsula South Complete Streets project).

For the second question, respondents were asked to select their top five priorities from a list of 18 choices. The third question was an optional open essay question asking respondents to share parkland and open space improvements they feel are important.

5.1 Responses for Project Priority Ranking Question

Question: Please rank the following projects by order of priority: (316)

This was a ranking question which received 316 responses. Five projects were presented, and participants were asked to rank the projects by order of priority, where 1 = highest priority or importance. Lower numbers mean the project was ranked higher by more respondents.

Rank	Project	1st Choice	5th Choice	Only Choice
2.31	Improve pathways and park entrances on the North and Central Common. This includes pathway realignment, lighting, and active transportation considerations.	80	17	4
2.46	Redesign and improve the older section of the skatepark.	149	63	39
3.09	Improve the boulevard areas of University Avenue to include public open space and recreational uses.	29	39	1
3.12	Improve the playing field on the Central Common for increased use and drop-in programming.	31	43	1
3.68	Develop conservation management and site interpretation plans for Camp Hill Cemetery. This includes vegetation management, interpretive signage, and vehicle access control.	24	100	0

Table 3: Project Priority Ranking

- The pathway improvements had the highest overall rank and was relatively consistent with high counts as a first or second choice and lower counts as a fourth and fifth choice.
- The conservation management plan for Camp Hill Cemetery had the lowest priority rank with low counts as a first or second choice and higher counts as a fourth or fifth choice.
- Improvements to University Avenue boulevards and improvements to the Central Common sportfield had consistent counts as a middle choice, with University Avenue ranking slightly ahead of the sportfield in the priority ranking.
- Although the skatepark had the highest count of respondents ranking it as their first choice in priority, it ranked second overall. The skatepark had the second highest count as a fifth choice. The skatepark also had the most count from respondents who only chose the skatepark and did not rank the other projects.

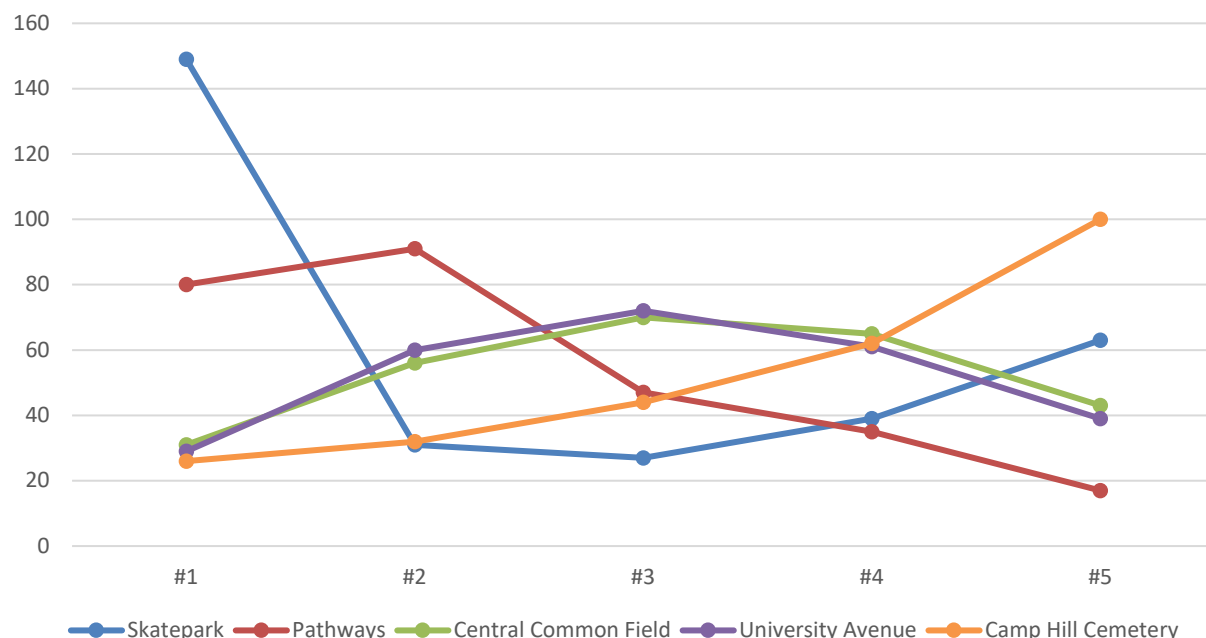


Figure 4: Project Priority Ranking Graph

5.2 Responses for Top Five Projects Question

Question: Please select your top 5 improvement priorities from the following list: (305)

This was a Checkbox question with a maximum of 5 limit. There were 305 responses for this question. Participants were asked to pick their top five choices from a list of 17 preselected projects. They also had the option to suggest other projects. The preselected projects included five projects relating to street improvements, seven projects relating to parkland improvements, and five projects relating to a study for the development of a strategy.

- Improving the park-like character of streets had the highest count and was chosen by more than half the respondents. All the street projects ranked in the top ten priorities.
- The top three park projects focus on improvements of the North Common and include improving the general park areas of the North and Central Common (rank 2nd), redesign of the Centennial Fountain (rank 3rd), and allocating more space for unstructured recreation on the North Common (rank 4th).
- Projects that entail studies for the development of strategies generally ranked lower overall. The top three priorities for studies were the public art framework (rank #9), the Public Gardens interpretive framework (rank 12th), and development of wayfinding system (rank 14th).

Project	Type	Count	Percent
1. Improve the park-like character of streets with trees, seating, wider sidewalks, and pedestrian area lighting.	Street	157	51.5%
2. Improve general park areas of the North and Central Common with new seating areas, tree planting, and naturalized landscaping.	Park	138	45.2%
3. Redesign the Centennial Fountain on the North Common with new water features, plaza, shade structure, and gardens.	Park	119	39.0%
4. Allocate more space for unstructured recreation (Common Green) and less space for organized sports (ball fields) on the North Common.	Park	105	34.4%
5. Improve intersection and mid-block crossings for people walking, rolling, and cycling.	Street	103	33.8%
6. Provide plazas and gathering areas at important intersections into the Halifax Common.	Street	98	32.1%
7. Improve site amenities for Victoria Park. This includes pathways, park entrances, planting beds, and adding festive winter lighting.	Park	74	24.3%
8. Develop the Promenade, an enhanced image route along the eastern edge of the Halifax Common, with seating areas, public art, and interpretive features.	Street	73	23.9%
9. Develop a public art framework for the Halifax Common district that identifies themes and opportunity sites for public art.	Study	64	21.0%
10. Improve Summer Street as a prominent north-south corridor with streetscape and open space improvements.	Street	54	17.7%
11. Improve the fountain area in Victoria Park. This includes improving site accessibility towards University Avenue.	Park	51	16.7%
12. Develop a framework for the Halifax Public Gardens to expand site interpretation, volunteer programming, and communications.	Study	46	15.1%
13. Other (please specify)		46	15.1%

14. Develop a wayfinding system for the Halifax Common district that directs and identifies heritage interests and cultural attractions.	Study	33	10.8%
15. Develop a park usage policy for the Halifax Public Gardens to aid in the management of cultural and horticultural assets.	Study	31	10.2%
16. Improve site amenities for Camp Hill Cemetery. This includes the entrance areas, additional seating, fencing replacement, and low impact pathway lighting.	Park	26	8.5%
17. Expand the outfield of the ball diamond on the Central Common for recreational slo-pitch use.	Park	24	7.9%
18. Develop a management plan for the cultural assets within municipal parkland.	Study	24	7.9%

Table 4: Top Five Projects Selection

There were 46 respondents who suggested other projects. The suggestions can be broken down into the following themes:

- A desire for improvements to the skatepark (23)
- Halifax Lancer growth and site expansion (7)
- Wanderers Field Stadium (1 support, 3 oppose)
- All-weather turf for Central Common field (2)
- Pickleball courts (2)
- Public washrooms (2)
- Centennial fountain improvements (2)
- Reduce active transportation (1)
- More parking (1)
- Container market (1)
- Deter encampments (1)
- More ball diamonds (1)
- More parkland elsewhere (1)
- Landscaping on North Common (1)

The following graph shows the project priorities clustered by project type with park projects shown with green bars, street projects with red bars, and Studies with blue bars.

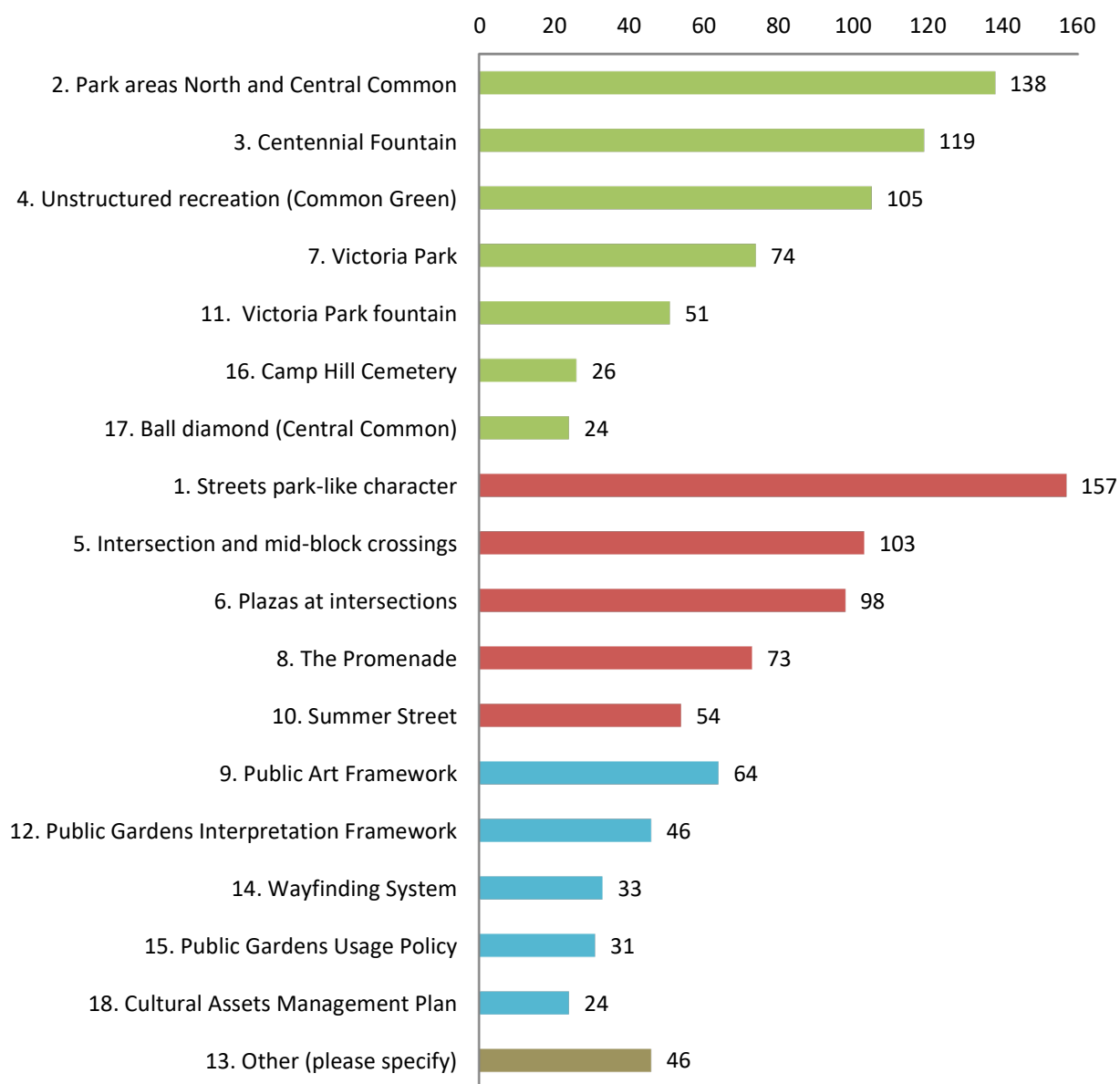


Figure 5: Top Five Projects by Project Type Graph

5.3 Responses for Suggested Improvements Question

Question: Please share any additional suggestions regarding parkland and open space improvements: (106)

This was an optional essay question with 106 responses. Some respondents commented on more than one topic. Recurring topic themes were as follows:

- Skatepark facility: redoing the asphalt section and other improvements (44)
- Environmental Design: naturalization, and more tree planting (9)
- Mobility and Linkages: walkability, bicycle infrastructure and reduced car zones (9)
- Preserving greenspace, and limiting development in lieu of open space (7)
- Playing fields: dedicated space for sports (2), support for unstructured usage and the Common Green (2), fewer ball diamonds (3)
- Halifax Lancers: expanding the facility (4) or leaving it the same (1)
- Park amenities: more benches, drinking fountains, washrooms, recycling bins, or bicycle parking (4)
- Wanderers Field: more events (1), build a permanent stadium (1), don't expand the soccer pitch (1)
- Programming for youth and arts (3)
- Prioritize quality design and plan for the long-term (2)
- Heritage interpretation for Freshwater Brook and Camp Hill Cemetery (2)
- Parking and Traffic: ban parking on parkland, reduce cars (2)

Single topic themes were as follows:

- Investing in transit (1)
- Pickleball facilities (1)
- More aquatic pools (1)
- Volunteer gardeners and clean-up teams (1)
- Retain the Wanderers Lawn Bowling Club (1)
- Retain Camp Hill as a working cemetery (1)
- Build more affordable housing instead (1)
- Don't change the existing space – acquire or expropriate land for new public uses (1)
- Open the greenhouses for the public to grow vegetables and flowers (1)

6.0 Closing Comments

At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional comments.

6.1 Responses for Closing Comments Question

Question: In closing, we would like to offer you an opportunity to add any additional comments regarding anything examined in this survey, or any topic related to the Halifax Common. (107)

This was an optional essay question with 107 responses. Some respondents commented on more than one topic. Recurring topic themes were as follows:

- Improvements to the skatepark (38)
- General thanks and support for the Master Plan (12)
- Advocacy for Halifax Lancers growth (9)
- Design related comments (7)
- Wanderers Field stadium: support (4), oppose (3)
- Walkability and active transportation (6)
- Environmental design and climate action (5)
- Returning public lands and expansion of the Halifax Common (4)
- No more building; keep green (4)
- Public uses or activity related comments (4)
- Advocacy for pickleball courts (3)
- More arts and cultural programming (3)

Single topic themes were as follows:

- Better access for lawn bowling facility (1)
- Maintain Camp Hill as a working cemetery (1)
- Spend money on practical things (1)
- Make Halifax beautiful and green (1)
- City Councillors should represent the will of voters (1)
- Work for residents, not big developers (1)
- Keep lines of communication open (1)