



What We
Heard Report

RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SPACES

OCTOBER 2019



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What We Heard Report
Recreation and Community Spaces
October 2019

Project Lunenburg
Town of Lunenburg Comprehensive Plan

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This report was prepared by Upland Planning and Design.

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There is an excellent variety of year-round community and recreation amenities in Lunenburg. The town has an abundance of parks, outdoor open spaces and trails in addition to many indoor recreation and leisure activity spaces. The Project Team sought to understand how the current inventory of community and recreation spaces meet the needs of Lunenburg residents, how recreation and community spaces could be improved, and what the future of recreation in Lunenburg could look like. The Project Team collected feedback and information related to Lunenburg's recreation and community spaces through three means:

- ▶ The Lunenburg Individual Survey;
- ▶ Social Pinpoint; and,
- ▶ Recreation and Community Spaces Community Workshop.

The Lunenburg Individual Survey, which asked respondents open- and closed-ended questions, was released to the public through a variety of methods including a mail-out invitation enclosed in Lunenburg residents' electricity bills. Survey responses were collected between February 27 and April 7, 2019. Also opened to the public at this time was Social Pinpoint – a web-based engagement platform that allows community members to leave location-specific comments by clicking on a map of Lunenburg. Social Pinpoint will be active throughout the engagement phase of Project Lunenburg so for the purpose of this report, the comment received on Social Pinpoint between February 28 and October 21, 2019 were analyzed. The Recreation and Community Spaces workshop was held on September 26, 2019 between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

This What We Heard Report is the fifth in a series of ten summarizing the input from the community regarding recreation and community spaces in Lunenburg. The input that forms the foundation of this report will guide future recommendations of the Comprehensive Community Plan.

Who Was Involved

Between February and October 2019, there were over 750 engagement interactions that contributed to this report. This included:

- ▶ Over 30 participants at the Recreation and Community Spaces Community Workshop;
- ▶ 462 Social Pinpoint submissions; and,
- ▶ 262 respondents to the Lunenburg Individual Survey.

During this period, the Project Team also installed a temporary 'parklet' along King Street to provide community and amenity space for residents and visitors in town. The parklet consisted of benches, chairs, tables, and planter boxes. This helped to prompt new ideas about what community space can be.



Figure 1: Temporary parklet installed along King Street.



Comments related to recreation and community spaces were received throughout Project Lunenburg activities. Three major theme areas emerged from the engagement related to recreation and community spaces:

- ▶ Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails;
- ▶ Recreation + Community Spaces and Programming;
- ▶ Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Education

Although comments were analyzed and categorized into one of the three primary theme areas, many comments are relevant within several themes.

Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails

As highlighted in the Recreation and Community Spaces Discussion Paper, Lunenburg has a wide array of outdoor parks, open spaces, and trails for residents and visitors of the town to enjoy. Especially among residents, there is a strong appreciation of these assets and the value they bring to the town. Within the engagement, respondents made suggestions to improve the current outdoor recreation assets, while also suggesting where new assets could be located.

One of the most popular outdoor recreation assets in Lunenburg is the town's network of trails. These trails traverse throughout the town; however, throughout the engagement, respondents wished to see even greater connectivity of parks and open spaces achieved using trails and sidewalks. This was coupled with suggestions that improved access would also increase the use of Lunenburg's open spaces. Respondents also mentioned the need for more access points to the trail system and better trail signage to direct people.

In addition to greater connectivity within Lunenburg, respondents mentioned their desire to see greater connectivity with parks and open spaces that are located outside of the Town boundary. Finally, respondents commented on how improved trail maintenance, such as paving, drainage and snow clearing, could increase the number of users, especially for those with accessibility concerns.



The community's relationship to the coastline and ocean were reflected in comments that stated the harbour and waterfront were also a favourite open space in Lunenburg. Community members and other stakeholders enjoy spending their time walking along and sitting at the waterfront. Despite this, stakeholders felt the harbour was an underutilized open space as the cleanliness of the harbour was a concern for residents and kept them from using it for aquatic activities.

While many respondents felt there is an adequate supply of parks, open spaces, and trails in Lunenburg, community members felt improvements were needed in some areas of town. In particular, respondents noted that in New Town there were fewer outdoor recreation opportunities for children than in other areas. Additionally, youth and teens within the town feel there are not adequate outdoor spaces for them to spend their time, especially in the summer months.

Outdoor Public Amenities

Throughout the engagement, respondents commented on specific amenities and design features that could improve existing outdoor recreation and community spaces. Amenities that stakeholders would like to see more of in Lunenburg include:

- ▶ Benches and sheltered coverings,
- ▶ Public washrooms,
- ▶ Waste and recycling bins,
- ▶ Picnic tables, and
- ▶ Lighting along trails.

Open Space Redesign

Respondents also left location-specific comments for how existing outdoor spaces could be redesigned.

1. Starr Street

Respondents suggested implementing a multi-use trail along Starr Street for walking, cycling, and wheeling that could connect to other existing trails in the town.

2. Waterfront Parking Lot

Respondents expressed their desire to see the removal of the parking lot on the waterfront and to see the space converted into a pedestrian area or plaza.



Figure 2: Trails allow stakeholders to remain active while also increasing their interactions with nature.



3. King Street and Bandstand Area

Respondents suggested shutting off portions of King Street to cars, either temporarily or permanently, and turning it into a pedestrian area. Additionally, respondents suggested making landscaping and grading improvements to the bandstand area so more people could enjoy the area as it is currently very steep.

4. Community Centre and Arena

There were many comments specific to the Community Centre and Arena area. Regarding recreation activity spaces, respondents suggested implementing Frisbee golf, additional tennis courts, an outdoor pickleball court, and to re-finish the track for walking. As this area houses the farmers market, respondents also suggested placing benches and sheltered seating outdoors.

The 'Blue Building' on Victoria Road garnered a lot of feedback for potential future uses related to recreation. Respondents proposed using the space as a dance studio or roller skating rink. Respondents also enquired if the outside of the building could be used for public art murals.

5. Blockhouse Hill

Many respondents suggested re-imagining Blockhouse Hill, specifically removing the campground and turning it into a public space. While respondents acknowledged the benefit of the campground, they believed a public park space would be more valuable to residents and visitors of the town.



Figure 3: Areas of specific concern for residents. Numbers correspond to the list on pages 6 and 7.

Recreation + Community Spaces and Programming



Many comments were submitted throughout the engagement that mentioned the types of facilities and programs members of the community would like to see in Lunenburg. Generally, there was support for the expansion of recreation and community spaces and programming throughout Lunenburg. Respondents mentioned a greater variety of winter recreation options (indoor and outdoor) were needed. Other general comments regarding recreation spaces and programming were:

- ▶ Programming can integrate recreation and education to a larger extent;
- ▶ Activity and event advertising expanded to include additional media types;
- ▶ Recreation and community spaces and the programs that are financially accessible to everyone in the community;
- ▶ Programming developed with specific cohorts;
- ▶ Programming designed for and accommodating all ages and abilities
- ▶ More collaboration between the Town and its institutions (i.e. Bluenose School) to facilitate greater recreational opportunities;
- ▶ Greater focus placed on creating physically accessible recreation spaces.

Activity-specific comments were also received through the engagement. Activities respondents would like more of are:

- ▶ Outdoor pickleball,
- ▶ Beach volleyball,
- ▶ Outdoor ice skating,
- ▶ Disk golf,
- ▶ Tennis.

The recreation and community space needs of different segments of the population became evident through the engagement. Youth and young families stressed the need for more drop-in and flexible programming that would fit their schedules better. Young families and youth also mentioned their desire to see more after school programming while youth in Lunenburg mentioned there were not enough spaces in town to spend their free time. Young professionals in Lunenburg felt there was a lack of recreation programming that suited their specific needs.

At the same time, seniors commented on the need to provide recreation opportunities that are accessible to all. This cohort acknowledged the social benefits of recreation and the ability to socialize with other members of the community. Seniors also expressed their desire to see more multi-functional communal spaces to socialize and hold events.

Finally, respondents were queried as to how recreation and community spaces and programming should be funded into the future. There were diverging views as to how the town should fund recreation and community spaces and programming; however, the majority of respondents stated that the Town should work with its current set of recreation assets instead of building new. Respondents commented on the potential for existing facilities to be re-imagined to better meet the needs of the community. Other potential ways respondents felt the Town could fund recreation and community spaces were:

- ▶ A shared funding model with neighbouring municipalities;
- ▶ Community based fundraising; and
- ▶ The sale of underutilized municipal properties.

Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Educational Spaces

The final theme to emerge from the engagement was related to arts, culture, heritage, and education. Respondents expressed their desire to see greater emphasis placed on artistic and cultural spaces in the town, specifically for theatre, music, dance, and the visual arts. Respondents suggested creating an amphitheatre in the town somewhere along the waterfront or on Blockhouse Hill. Within existing arts and cultural spaces, respondents suggested integrating the town's history and heritage to a larger extent.

Many respondents mentioned the library at the Academy as an important leisure space; however, comments were submitted regarding how more educational and work spaces were needed. Respondents expressed the desire to see multi-functional work and meeting spaces that could be rented. Additionally, respondents stated the need for more lifelong educational institutions, in order to enhance learning opportunities for learning a new language or computational skills, among others.



Figure 5: Oqwa'titek Amphitheatre located in Annapolis Royale's is located on its waterfront. The space is open to the public and is free to book.



Through this engagement the Project Team interacted with residents and stakeholder from Lunenburg and the surrounding areas. As became evidently clear, recreation and leisure activities take on different meanings to every individual. For some, recreation encompasses sports and other organized active exercise, while for some, recreation has more to do with the interconnectedness of physical health, social interactions, and spiritual pursuits. For others, recreation is the ability to participate in musical and other cultural events, visiting the dog park, farmers market, and other spaces in the town were an avenue for recreation. As such, the future of recreation and community spaces in Lunenburg should reflect the wide range of potential interpretations of 'recreation'.

The choice of recreation and leisure spaces for members of the community reflect the coastal, rural identity of the town. Coastal and inland trails, and the waterfront boardwalk are open spaces that are revered by the public. The use of the town's trails, parks, and open spaces are a source of unstructured recreation for members of the community. Enhancing these assets will reinforce the identity of Lunenburg as a rural, coastal town and strengthen the connection people have to their community.

There was a recognition of the social, environmental, and cultural benefits of recreation on top of the benefits to one's physical health. Many respondents emphasized the benefits that they got from the social interactions that take place during recreation and leisure activities. Additionally, respondents acknowledged the benefits that are derived from interacting with nature, including along the town's trails and open spaces. Ensuring that recreation and leisure activities are available to every member of the community throughout the year, no matter their age or physical ability, will foster a physically, socially, and cultural healthy community.

Throughout the engagement, participants repeatedly expressed design and programming principles to make the town's community and recreation spaces more inviting and usable. Respondents wished to see greater emphasis on intergeneration spaces that could cater to the needs of young families, while also serving the needs of the town's older population. There is a growing acknowledgement that providing adequate recreation opportunities for all could help in keeping young people in the town while attracting young families who may want to settle in Lunenburg.

Community members within Lunenburg are actively engaged in all types of recreation and leisure. Indoor and outdoor facilities provide spaces that help members of the community to be active, socialize, and interact with nature. The results from this engagement emphasize the importance of recreation and also where current gaps exist in programming and recreation spaces. Moving forward, these findings will be used to inform the Comprehensive Community Plan and the recommendations contained within.



Figure 5: Harbourfront Centre's Natrel Rink (Toronto) activates the waterfront with wintertime activities.



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