

December, 2023



GORSEBROOK PARK CLUBHOUSE PROJECT

Community Consultation ←

Presented by

Halifax RFC



www.gorsebrookparkclubhouse.com

Halifax, NS

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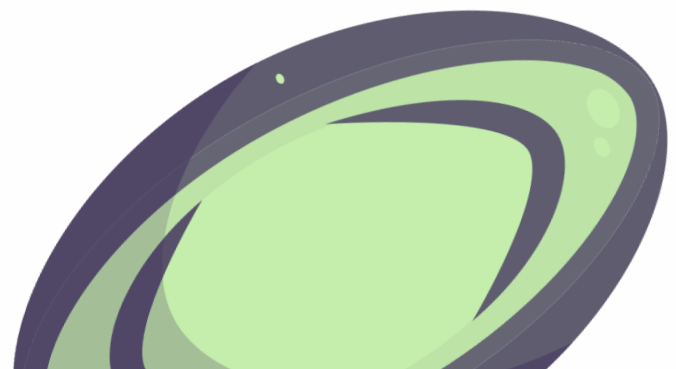
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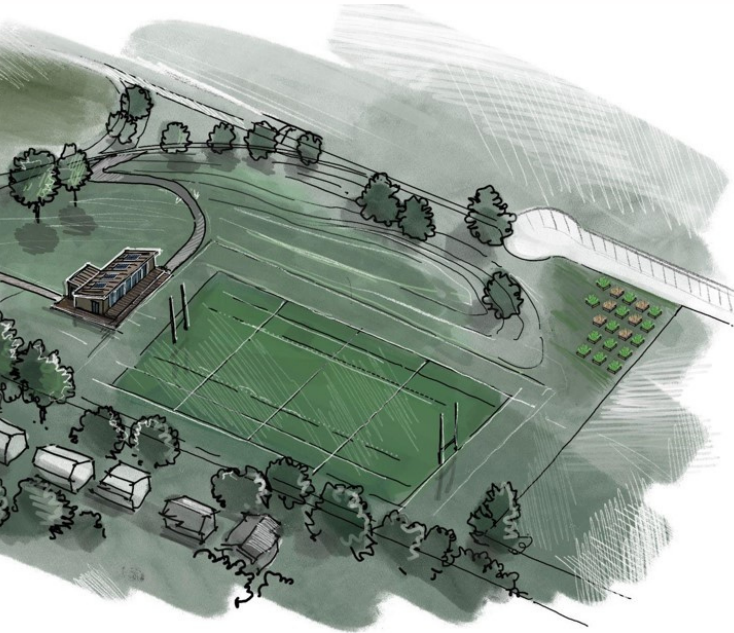
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Introduction



Founded in 1958, Halifax RFC has been an integral part of the local rugby and broader athletic community in Halifax for over six decades. As initially presented to Halifax's Community Planning and Economic Development Committee on January 17, 2023, we seek to build a clubhouse facility beside the sports field in Gorsebrook Park. The building would include public washrooms, change rooms, storage, and community space. Facilities would be available for rent to community groups including but not limited to sports teams. Following our January presentation, staff were directed to engage with Halifax RFC as we embarked on a comprehensive Community Engagement process, ensuring that our plans align with the community's needs and the city's objectives.

Community Engagement Approach

Throughout 2023 we sought to understand and incorporate the diverse needs and concerns of Gorsebrook Park's users through a multi-faceted engagement strategy:

- **Online Survey:** Conducted to gather feedback from over 200 respondents, including our club members, other athletic teams, and local residents.
- **Public Event:** An on-site event at Gorsebrook Park enabled us to directly interact with community members, providing a platform to discuss their views and gather valuable insights.
- **Targeted Meetings:** Detailed discussions with specific groups, such as local sports teams, schools, and resident associations, offered deeper understanding of varied perspectives.

This report elaborates on the outcomes of these engagement efforts and reflects our dedication to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and functional community space.



Objectives ←



Engage with Local Community & Athletic Users of Gorsebrook Park

Our foremost goal for 2023 was to create a meaningful engagement with both the local community and athletic users of Gorsebrook Park. This involved understanding and integrating their needs, preferences, and concerns into our project. We aimed to reach out to various groups, including casual park visitors, community garden enthusiasts, families who use the playground, and athletes from various sports disciplines. By doing so, we hoped to ensure that the park's development truly reflects the diverse interests and requirements of all its users, fostering a sense of ownership and pride within the community.

Collaborate on Building a Clubhouse

A central component of our project is the collaboration with the City of Halifax to develop a clubhouse or fieldhouse within Gorsebrook Park. This facility is envisioned to be a multifunctional space that can cater to the needs of our rugby club as well as other sports teams and community events. The clubhouse will serve as a focal point for sporting activities, offering amenities like changing rooms, meeting spaces, and a social area. Our continued collaboration aims to ensure that the design and functionality of this facility align with community expectations and city standards, making it a valuable asset for both the athletic community and the general public.

Augment Halifax's Plans

In alignment with the existing development plans of the City of Halifax for Gorsebrook Park, we propose to augment these plans by adding athletic facilities. This includes not just the basics like public washrooms and drinking fountains, but also more specialized amenities such as change rooms, showers, and equipment storage. These additions are intended to enhance the usability and appeal of the park for sports teams and individual athletes. By complementing the city's plans with these athletic facilities, we aim to create a more comprehensive and inclusive recreational space that can serve a wider array of community activities and sports programs.

Methodology



Online Survey

Halifax RFC ran an online survey from September 20 - October 13 2023, which was communicated through the distribution of **400** flyers to local residents and a social media ad campaign which resulted in **9600** impressions. Overall **242** community members completed the survey.



Public Event

On September 26, Halifax RFC hosted a community BBQ and information session with local residents, attracting over 100 members of the community and giving out 160 hamburgers and hotdogs!



Community Meetings

Halifax RFC met with **13** distinct stakeholder groups to understand how the proposed project would impact them. **Seven** of these groups have provided Letters of Support, to accompany this report.

Stakeholders Engaged

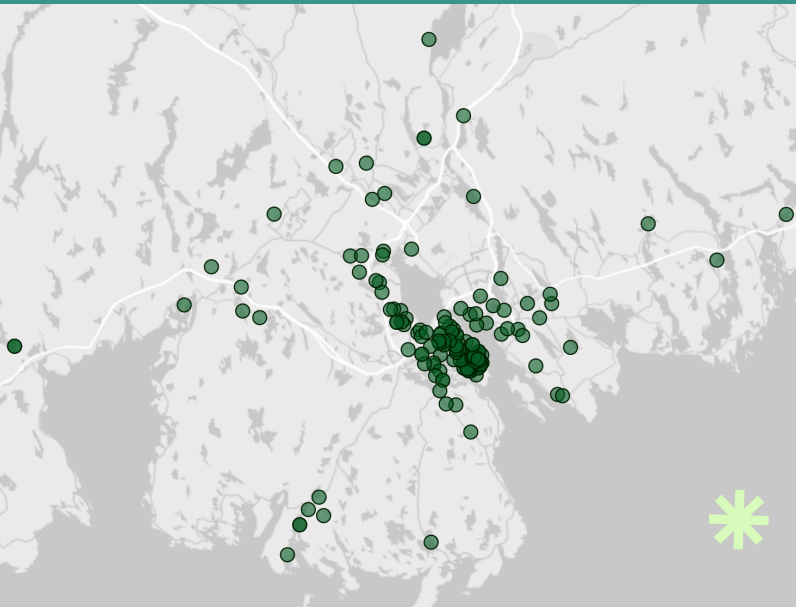
- Halifax Minor Ball Hockey League*
- Metro Touch Football League*
- Lacrosse NS*
- Sacred Heart School of Halifax
- Dalhousie Rugby*
- Peninsula Urban Garden Society
- University of Kings College Rugby*
- Halifax Gaels GAA club
- Inglis Street School
- Rugby NS*
- Halifax Ultimate*
- Park to Park
- Tennis NS



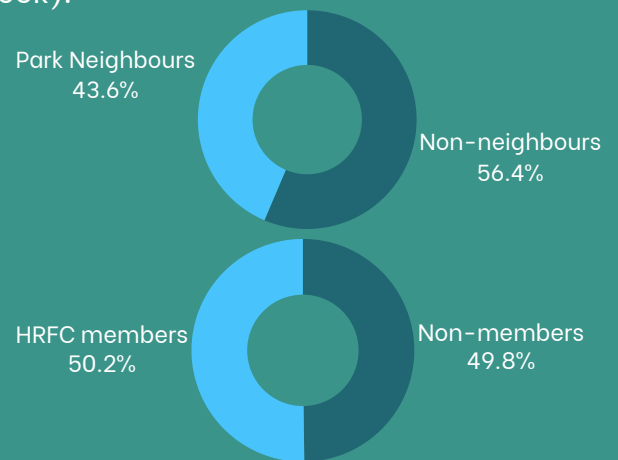


Findings ←

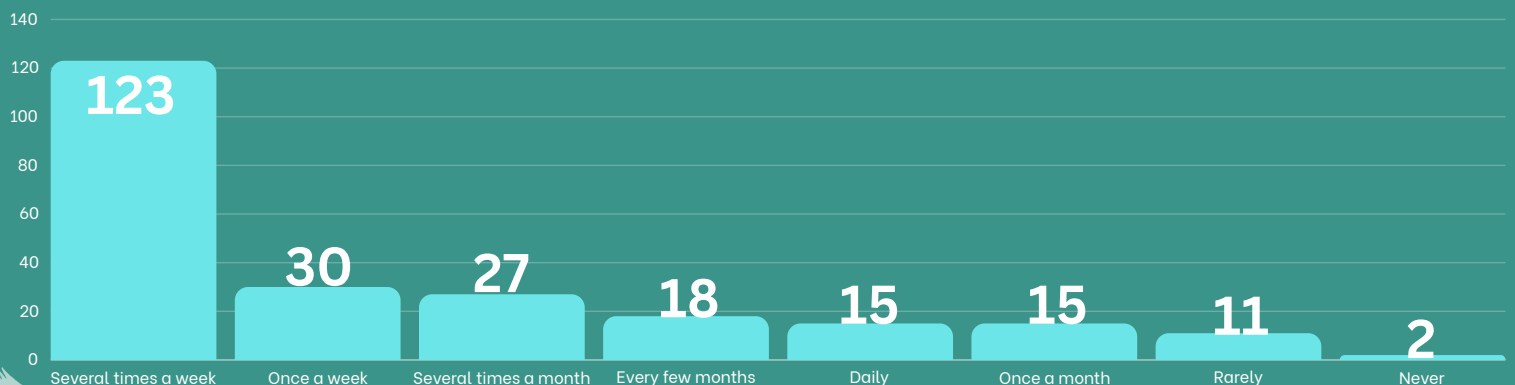
1. Who was engaged



Survey respondents came from all over HRM, but with a significant concentration on the peninsula of Halifax. They were also a mix of club members and non-members. Respondents tended towards being intensive park users (nearly ¾ of respondents use the park one or more times during the week).

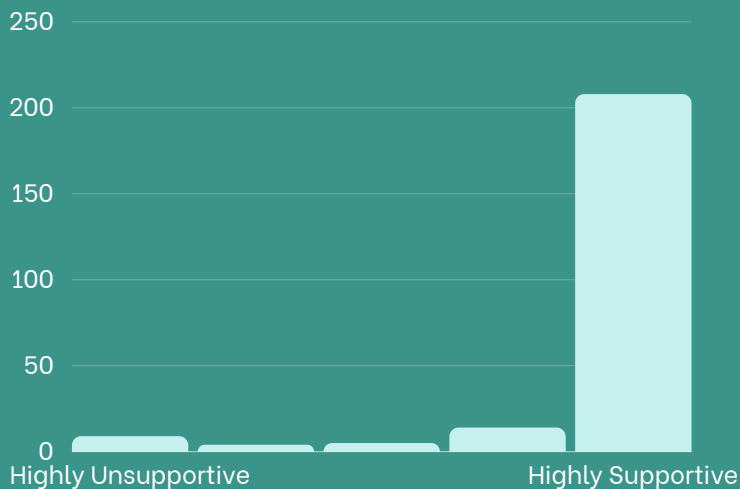


More than half of the survey respondents indicated that they use the park several times a week and the vast majority (90%) were users of the sports field. But there were also many respondents who used: the unstructured greenspace (33%), playground (27%), Tennis/Basketball courts (17%), Community garden (13%), lacrosse/ball hockey rink (10%), and ball diamonds (10%).



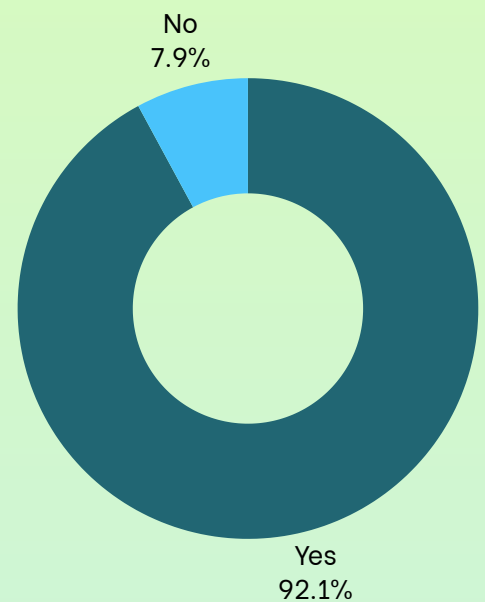
2. Support for the Project

How supportive are you of the proposed clubhouse project?



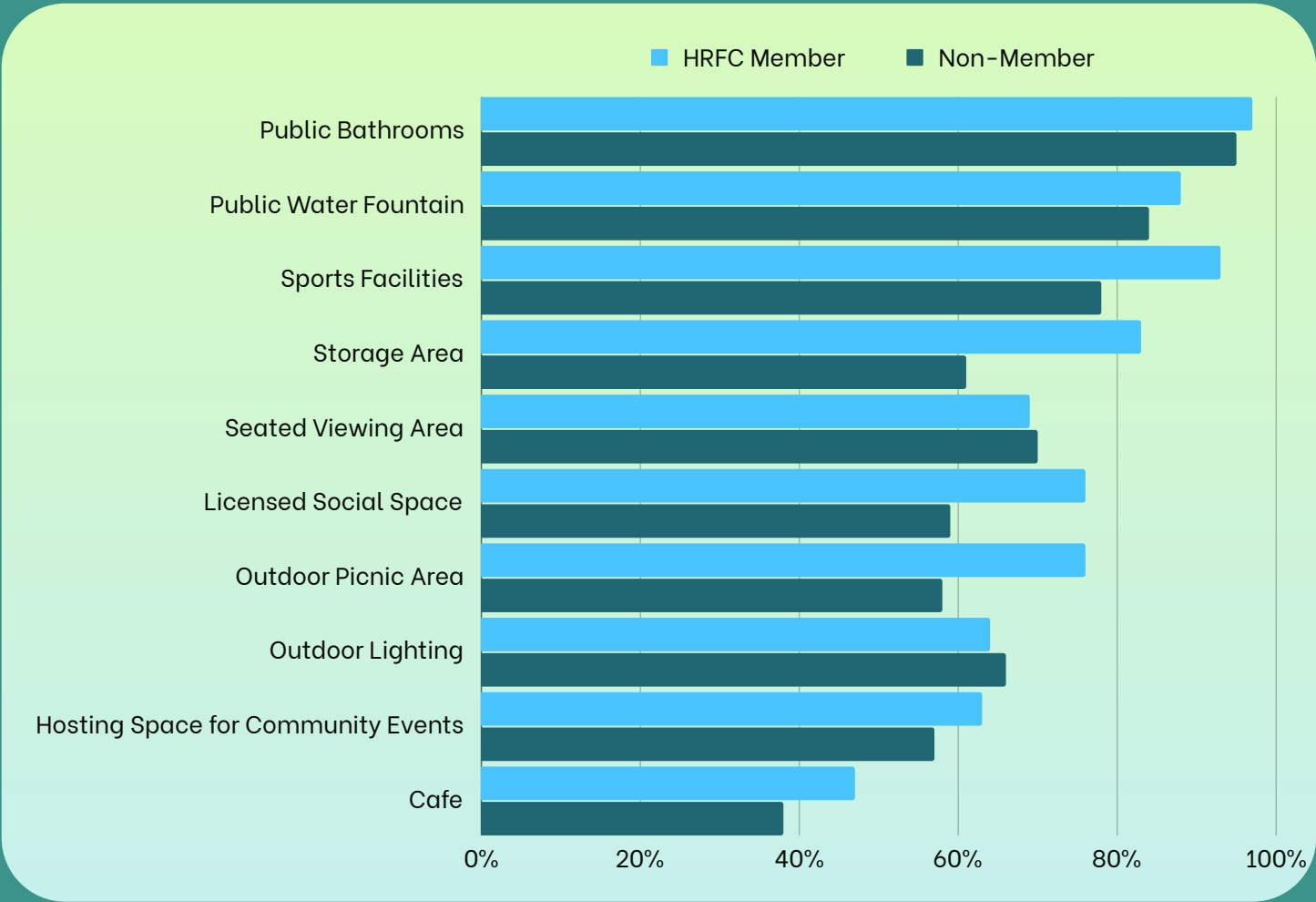
Over 92% of respondents were supportive (scored 4 or 5) with over 86% being highly supportive. 5.4% were unsupportive (scored 1 or 2). Concerns cited include security, misuse of facilities, governance and operations, having a licensed venue in a public park, loss of greenspace, and privatization of public land (which is not contemplated in this project). There were also questions about the consultation process (specifically concerns that the club was running the process and not the city).

Does the proposed project increase the likelihood of you coming to the park?





3. Priority Features



Overall 96% of all respondents identified the public washroom as a priority for this project, followed by public water fountain (86%). The proposed sports facilities were supported by 85% of all respondents, which included 78% support from respondents who were not members of Halifax RFC. Out of the proposed features a cafe was the least popular option with support from under 50% of both club members and non-members alike.





4. Identified Community Concerns

Safety and Security Concerns

- **Community Concern:** There were worries about vandalism, unauthorized access, and the facilities potentially becoming a gathering spot for youths or the unhoused population, which could lead to safety issues.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** Implementing security measures such as surveillance cameras, appropriate outdoor lighting, and regular supervision by staff could help address these concerns. Additionally, involving local law enforcement in creating a safety plan and conducting regular safety audits could further ensure the security of the facilities.

Privatization of Public Spaces

- **Community Concern:** Local residents expressed concerns about the privatization of public spaces, fearing restricted access to park facilities.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** Clear communication about the public ownership and operation of the facilities is crucial. Ensuring that the City of Halifax maintains ownership and control over the park and its amenities, with the club possibly managing certain aspects in collaboration with the city, can alleviate these concerns. Transparency in operation and open access policies would also be essential.

Local Environment and Community Character

- **Community Concern:** A few residents raised concerns about the environmental impact of new construction and how it blends with the existing community character.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** Environmental impact assessments and adherence to sustainable building practices will be important. Engaging local architects and planners who understand the community's character will ensure the new structures complement the existing environment. Involvement of the community in the design process can also ensure their views are considered.



Impact on the Community



The proposed project by Halifax RFC at Gorsebrook Park is anticipated to significantly increase park usage, enhancing it as a vibrant community hub. By introducing well-designed, accessible facilities, the park is expected to better serve a broad spectrum of visitors. This includes families, athletes, and community groups, fostering a more dynamic and interactive park environment. The enhanced facilities will not only cater to sports enthusiasts but also provide essential amenities that encourage more people to spend time outdoors, engage in physical activities, and connect with nature.





Improved Facilities for Diverse User Groups



Community Cohesion and Enhanced Safety



Support for Educational and Athletic Activities



Sustainability and Addressing Long-term Community Needs

Central to our project is the improvement of park facilities to cater to a wide range of users. The addition of fully accessible washrooms and drinking fountains addresses a critical gap, especially beneficial for children and individuals with physical disabilities. These improvements are crucial in making the park more inclusive and user-friendly, ensuring that facilities are not just for athletic activities but also for general community use. By addressing these basic needs, we aim to make Gorsebrook Park a more welcoming space for all.

The project is designed to enhance community cohesion by providing a space where various groups can come together. The inclusion of a community social space is particularly important in light of the rapid population growth in Halifax’s south end. Moreover, addressing the concerns of local residents, we plan to implement safety measures such as appropriate outdoor lighting and security cameras. These initiatives will not only mitigate concerns about vandalism and unauthorized access but also create a safer environment for youth and all park visitors.

Our collaboration with the local schools represents a significant opportunity to support educational activities. The proposed facilities will provide much-needed amenities for students engaging in outdoor education and sports, addressing issues such as the current lack of accessible bathrooms for playground users. Additionally, by offering convenient equipment storage, changing rooms, and bathrooms, we aim to enhance the experience for school sports and extracurricular activities, further embedding the park as an integral part of the local educational landscape.

In line with the feedback received during our engagement process, we are committed to ensuring that the development and operation of the facilities remain focused on long-term sustainability and inclusivity. Regular assessments will be conducted to ensure that the facilities continue to meet the evolving needs of the community. By doing so, we aim to maintain Gorsebrook Park as a relevant and cherished space for future generations, underlining our commitment to the well-being and development of our community.





Future Plans ←



Ongoing Engagement

Halifax RFC is committed to maintaining an open dialogue with the community as the Gorsebrook Park project progresses. We plan to continue utilizing surveys, public forums, and community meetings to gather feedback and keep residents informed. This ongoing engagement will ensure that the project remains aligned with community needs and preferences.

Development of Facilities

The development of facilities at Gorsebrook Park will be approached in phases, prioritizing elements based on community feedback and available resources. Our focus will initially be on establishing essential amenities like accessible washrooms and drinking fountains, followed by sports facilities and community spaces, ensuring a balanced development that benefits all park users.

Collaboration

We envision a strong partnership with the City of Halifax and other stakeholders in bringing this project to fruition. Collaboration will be key in aligning our goals with city plans, securing necessary approvals, and ensuring that the project serves the wider community interests.

Addressing Long-term Community Needs

Our vision extends beyond the immediate completion of the project. As Halifax RFC approaches our 70th year in operation we are dedicated to regular assessments of our role within the park and wider community to adapt to changing needs. This approach will help in maintaining the relevance and utility of the park for future generations, ensuring it remains a cherished community asset.

Sustainability and Inclusivity Goals

Sustainability and inclusivity will be at the forefront of our development plans. We aim to adopt eco-friendly practices in the construction and operation of the facilities and ensure that they are accessible and welcoming to all members of the community, reflecting our commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility.





Thank You For Your Attention

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Halifax RFC