# Village of New Maryland Athletic Park Redevelopment Study What We Heard Report

November 2022

UPLAND REConsulting Group

Athletic Park Redevelopment Study What We Heard Report

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This report was prepared by UPLAND Planning + Design Inc., in association with REConsulting.

## UPLAND REConsulting Group



For the Village of New Maryland

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## Background



## 1 Community Engagement Context

#### 1.1 What is this Report?

This is a report about public consultation on the Athletic Park Redevelopment Study in the Village of New Maryland. It describes public engagement activities that were organized to involve residents of New Maryland in discussions about the future of the park, and it summarizes the public feedback which was received during these various types of engagement.

This type of document is called a 'What We Heard Report'. It intends to give the reader an overview of typical opinions voiced by the public during the engagement process. It should be noted that this report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Village officials, but rather represents a cross-section of public opinions as they were voiced during the consultations.

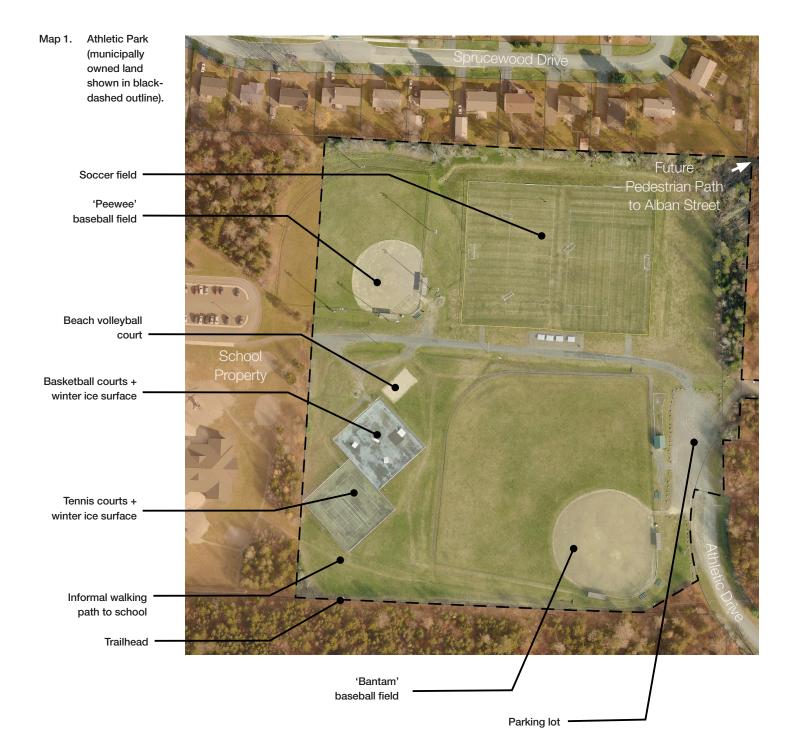
#### 1.2 Subject of the Dialogue

Athletic Park is located next to the New Maryland Elementary School and is the central facility for outdoor organized sports and leisure activities in New Maryland, with regular programming and events from spring to fall. It contains fields and courts for baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis and beach volleyball. Next to the tennis courts, a narrow strip of woods roughly demarcates the boundary between municipal park property and provincial school property.

For more details on the specifics of New Maryland Athletic Park, its usage statistics, local demographic data and general recreation trends in New Brunswick, please refer to the Athletic Park 'Background Report' which can be accessed on the <u>Village of New Maryland web site</u>.

Residents of the Village of New Maryland sitting around a map of Athletic Park during a public event.





#### 1.3 Objectives

Public consultation is key to a successful redevelopment of Athletic Park. Dialogue within the community is always essential for ensuring that such design projects are rooted within the community and that they take detailed account of the needs of residents, community groups, organized sports providers and other stakeholders.

The goal of this part of the project was to establish a set of principles and objectives for the upcoming design work. Through a comprehensive dialogue, the main functional requirements of Athletic Park were considered from the many perspectives and opinions throughout the community. The general objectives of the public consultation phase were to:

- + understand the community's recreation needs, both currently and in the future;
- + understand how to accommodate all user groups and activities at Athletic Park;
- explore opportunities for building capacity and partnerships across sectors and community boundaries; and
- + gather input regarding the redevelopment of the unused or underutilized park property.

Central walkway in Athletic Park with lighting.



### 2 What We Did

Consultations were held during the months of September and October 2022. Several methods of consultation were used in an effort to gain the perspectives of a wide cross-section of community members. This included an online survey, recreation user groups consultation, and a public design workshop.

#### 2.1 Public Survey

A survey was used to reach individual residents and community members. This survey asked participants about recreation activities and services that they enjoy, barriers to participation and satisfaction with the existing recreation offerings available in the Village of New Maryland. This survey was available both online and in paper format.

## 2.2 Recreation User Groups Consultation

Recreation user groups are an integral component of the recreation and physical activity delivery system. The project team completed interviews with several of these groups in New Maryland. These interviews explored the relationship between user groups and the Village in order to identify cost-effective ways that user groups can be supported to increase their recreation capacity. The recreation user groups that were consulted included:

- + New Maryland Basketball League
- + Fredericton Pickleball Club
- + Parish of New Maryland Zoomers

- + Speeding Cheetahs Run Club
- + New Maryland Soccer
- New Maryland Elementary School, including the 'Students' Voice Committee'
- + New Maryland Minor Baseball Association
- + Lions Club
- + Faith Baptist Church
- + Representatives of neighbouring communities in the Local Service District

#### 2.3 Public Design Workshop

The consultant team and Village of New Maryland staff hosted a Design Workshop with residents to bring initial ideas to paper in a hands-on format. Residents were invited to participate in design activities that were intended to spark conversations about their ideas for the future of Athletic Park including possible recreation activities, park features, and preferences about the design aspects of the park.

#### 2.4 Other Opportunities

Direct contact with the project team was also possible. The municipal website included a page devoted to the project that encouraged the public to reach out through a dedicated e-mail address and phone number. Only a few residents contacted the project team directly and their points were consistent with feedback received otherwise.

## Outcomes



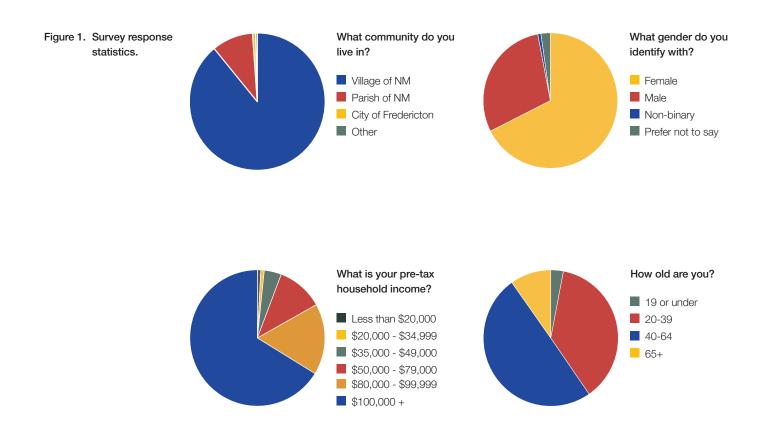
### 3 Public Survey

#### 3.1 Survey Response

The public survey was well received in New Maryland. In total, 266 people responded to the survey over a five-week period from late September to late October 2022.

A vast majority of 236 respondents indicated that they live in New Maryland. This means that 5.7% of the Village's population actively participated in the survey. They shared information about how they currently use the park and their visions for the park's future. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to respond to some demographic questions for the survey's statistics. Nearly half were between the ages of 40-64, and 66% earned an income of \$100,000 or more.

This is comparable to the overall population profile of the Village as established in the Census, meaning that this sample is a good representation of the Village as a whole.

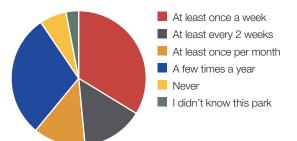


"The park was the main reason we bought a house in New Maryland. It's a huge draw, but it could be better by making it more of a park and not only a sports location."

#### 3.2 Current Park Use Feedback

There is no clear tendency in terms of how often residents use Athletic Park overall. Many use it once per week; however, many say they only use it a few times per year. On another note, the survey showed a significant difference between usage patterns of households with and without children. The majority responded to the survey saying they did not have children. Of the respondents with children, the majority said their children use the park at least once per week. For households with children between the ages of 7-19, about 40% of households indicate to use the park weekly, which is likely related to organized sports which enjoy a high level of popularity among youth.

### Figure 2. How often do you spend time in Athletic Park? (on average)



Soccer field with bleachers and 'Peewee' baseball field in the background.



#### **Participation in Activities**

Respondents were asked what types of activities they or their family participate in. The question did not limit the responses to engagement in activities within Athletic Park, but rather tried to establish what residents of New Maryland generally do in their free time. Most respondents indicated they participate in walking, running, hiking, and jogging, followed by winter solo sports. Other answers included golf, roller skating, disc golf, and curling.

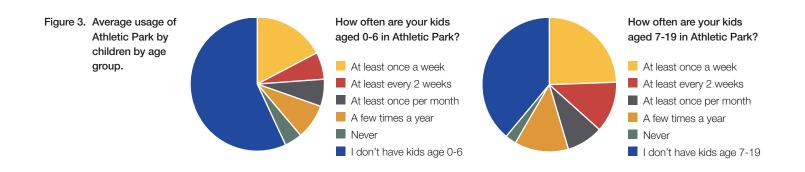
Table 1.	What outdoor
	activities do you
	or members of
	your household
	currently
	participate in?
	Select all that
	apply.

14/1

Activity	% of respondents who participate
Walking, hiking, jogging, and/or running	93%
Winter solo sports (snowshoeing, cross country or downhill ski, skating, etc.)	72%
Team sports (baseball, soccer, basketball, etc.)	57%
Playground play	55%
Water sports (kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, lake/ocean swimming, etc.)	54%
Cycling or skateboarding (including mountain biking)	54%
Gardening	43%
Nature appreciation (photography, birding, etc.)	36%
Fitness classes (bootcamps, outdoor gym classes, etc.)	33%
Summer solo sports (tennis, pickle ball, etc.)	32%
Racquet sports (tennis, pickleball, badminton, etc.)	31%
Other (please specify)	9%

#### Youth Participation in Activities

Respondents were also asked what limits them or their family from participating in activities at Athletic Park. A lack of facilities was the most common response. Other answers included concerns around safety, a lack of washroom facilities, a lack of seating, and a lack of programming for all age groups.



Beach volleyball court in Athletic Park.



#### Limits to Participation

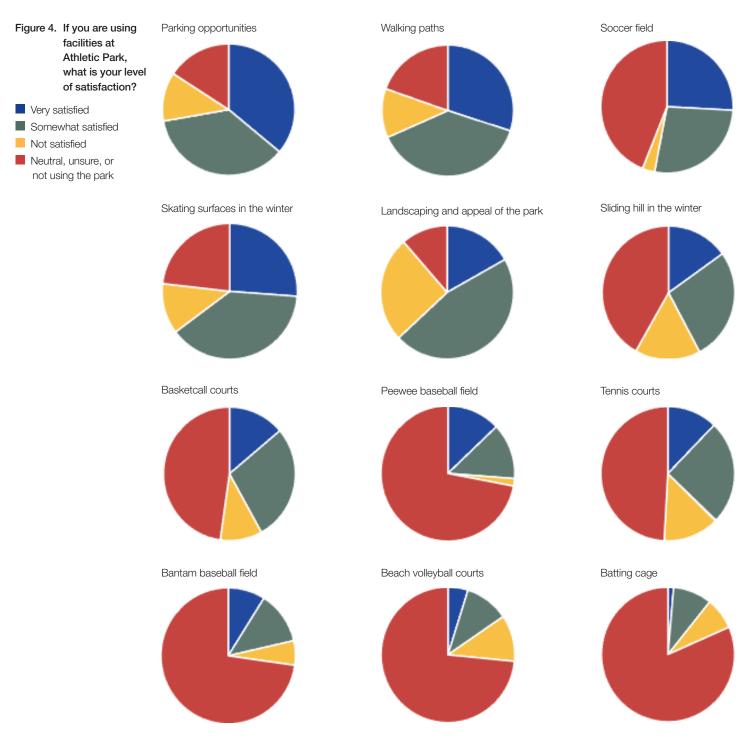
Survey respondents were asked whether they feel there is anything that prevents them from participating in recreational activities or limits their ability to do so. Respondents were able to select more than one option from the below response options.

Only one about one third of respondents felt that there are currently no barriers to full participation in recreational activities. On average, two out of five survey participants felt that there is a lack of facilities for the type of recreational activity that they are interested in. One in four respondents felt that a lack of programmed activities prevents them from being more active. Just under one in five respondents also indicated that have limited knowledge about recreational offerings.

Other types of responses sporadically came up and are documented in the table below.

Answer	% of responses
Lack of facilities	40%
Nothing	35%
Lack of programs/classes	26%
Not sure what is available	18%
Other	9%
Lack of interest	6%
Uncomfortable or intimidated to try	5%
Do not feel welcome or safe	4%
Distance	3%
Cost	2%
Access to transportation	2%
Childcare	2%
Accessibility (disability or health condition)	1%

Table 2. What, if anything, limits you or your family members from participating in activities in the New Maryland Athletic Park?



#### 3.3 Future Park Use Feedback

The survey provided insight into how the community wants Athletic Park to be improved, and what their vision for the future of the park entails.

#### Facilities

Survey respondents were asked what facilities would encourage them to use Athletic Park more often, and were able to select multiple options from a list of facilities. Responses were as follows:

- + 177 voted for washrooms;
- 142 voted for accommodation of new sports facilities. The most popular types of facilities listed were a pool (55 votes), a splash pad (33 votes), pickleball courts (18 votes), a skate park (15 votes), and a track (13 votes);
- 95 voted for play areas for children aged 7-19;
- + 50 voted for play areas for children under the age of 6;
- + 29 voted for changing rooms.

Washrooms were mentioned by participants frequently throughout the survey. Many found it challenging to access the current washrooms while participating in activities at the other end of the park. This was found to be particularly problematic for park users with with young children.

Respondents were asked if there are any other facilities that would encourage them to use Athletic Park.

158 people responded to this question. Respondents were were able to select multiple options from a list of facilities.

29% and 28% of respondents suggested a splash pad and a pool would be a good addition to the park, respectively. Many people discussed how there are no water-based activities in New Maryland, and that they find this to be problematic in the summer months.

19% of respondents voted for a dog park. Many people suggest that this would be a great way to build relationships with neighbours and other residents. Some comments suggested that this should be a priority for the park, as there is no public space in New Maryland that allows residents to let their dogs run off-leash.

13% of respondents voted for a skate park. A skate park was proposed to accommodate many types of activities, including skateboarding, biking, scootering, and rollerskating. Several respondents also suggested a pump track would be a good addition, allowing residents to practice mountain biking skills. 13% of respondents voted for a track. A track could accommodate several age groups and types of activities, such as walking, running, roller blading, biking, and pushing strollers. One consideration raised in the responses was that the track should be paved so that it is more accessible.

Several respondents commented on the trail network, and how there is a desire for a bigger, better-connected trail network that can accommodate a range of activities. Respondents expressed a desire for some trails to be groomed for cross country skiing in the winter, and for there to be more trail signage. Some people also discussed how it would be great to have more cycling trails so that people did not have to cycle on the roads. Several respondents also commented on the need for upgrades to some of the features in Athletic Park. For example, multiple respondents discussed the importance of resizing the Bantam Baseball diamond, saying that it is too large, and that it is in need of upgrades. Tennis courts, basketball courts, beach volleyball courts, and the soccer field were also mentioned as needing upgrades.

Some other suggested facilities which respondents would welcome in the park, and that were mentioned at least five times, included pickle ball courts, a picnic space, a water fountain, and a covered ice rink.

One of the existing baseball fields at Athletic Park.



#### **Recreation Activities**

The survey asked participants what recreation activities and programs they would like to participate in, but cannot currently access in New Maryland. 151 survey participants responded to this question.

49% of respondents said that they would like to participate in water activities in New Maryland. This included lane swimming, splash pads, swimming lessons, wading pools, and aquafit.

15% said that they would like to be able to participate in more fitness activities. Many people said that outdoor fitness equipment would be a good addition to Athletic Park, especially since there is no other gym facility in New Maryland. Some other types of fitness activities mentioned included Zumba, yoga, group fitness, spin classes, children's dance classes, adult sport leagues, and weight training.

8% of respondents indicated that they would like to be able to participate in pickleball. Other activities that people would like to participate in but could not access included walking, skateboarding, community gardening, disc golf, and cross country skiing. Many respondents also expressed how they would like to see the formation of new activity clubs. For example, a walking club and a cross country ski club were both mentioned frequently. Another common theme was a desire for programming for residents of all ages. Currently, most programming is directed towards younger age groups. There is a desire to see additional programming for teens, adults, and seniors. Some respondents described how it would be nice to have programming for families, and not just solo or team based sports.

#### **Park Amenities**

Throughout the survey, respondents commented on how certain features would make Athletic Park more comfortable, and a more pleasant place overall. A few participants discussed how some type of weather protection, such as a gazebo or pavilion, would encourage people to use the park in poor weather. Further suggested features included picnic tables, benches, garbage cans, trees, shade structures, gardens, and more landscaping.

A few respondents described concerns around personal safety. Some raised concerns with letting children play alone at the park, since there have been instances of loitering and vandalism in the past. Respondents suggest a good way to mitigate for this would be by installing more lighting.

One resident suggested a ping pong table or a chess board set up would be a great addition to Athletic Park.

## 4 Recreation User Groups Consultation

#### 4.1 Approach

Consultation of recreation user groups is an essential component in the planning and design process. The project team completed in-depth interviews with 10 recreation user groups in New Maryland.

#### 4.2 Feedback Themes

Several themes emerged as a result of these discussions which will provide guidance for the initial design phase.

#### **Recreation Amenities**

Multiple users suggested incorporating a running track into the park design, and a gravel track with three or four lanes was suggested as an excellent starting point. Some users suggested that a 400 metre-long synthetic oval track would be a wishlist feature. Either way, this was seen as an especially important feature for seniors, students, running groups, and for runners who want to learn new skills such as sprinting or hurdles because there is currently no track access in either New Maryland or Fredericton.

Currently, cross-county running groups rely on the trail system exclusively, which is a barrier for growth of the sport due to the limited extent of the trail system. It was suggested that a park perimeter path would be a useful feature for those who want to run cross-country, including many students at the school. Multiple users suggested that a water feature, such as a splash pad or fountain would be a welcome addition to Athletic Park, as currently the nearest public water feature is in Fredericton and people travel there to cool off during the summer months.

Three users suggested incorporating outdoor fitness stations into Athletic Park. Two users said that Hanwell has outdoor recreation activity stations, and that it would be great if New Maryland could offer something similar.

Two users suggested adding pickleball courts to Athletic Park. A pickleball recreation group recommended that six courts would be a good number to add to the park, as there needs to be a sufficient number of courts for the number of players who regularly participate. The group suggested that one or two courts would be too few. Some requirements for the court include covered benches for players waiting to take their turn, windscreens, and sufficient spacing between the courts.

Two users noted that most of the open space in Athletic Park is allocated to dedicated programming, and suggested that a multipurpose space for unstructured uses would be a good addition. A multi-purpose space would also allow for new types of programming to be offered, such as taichi, yoga, dancing, and meeting rooms.

Two user groups requested more nets be added to the basketball court. Currently there are no nets on one of the courts, and all of the nets that exist are too tall for many of the children who participate in basketball related programming. The recommended height for new nets is 8-feet tall.

Views about a skatepark were mixed among the users interviewed. Some said that they would welcome a skatepark in the community, while others were concerned that a skatepark would result in a lot of injuries.

Other suggestions included incorporating an indoor or outdoor hockey or ice skating surface, a turf field, volleyball courts, tennis courts, a curling surface, a bocce ball court, an aquatic facility, a rubber court for 3-on-3 basketball tournaments, a pump track, and a dog park. One user commented that if the batting cage was bigger, more people could use it at once.

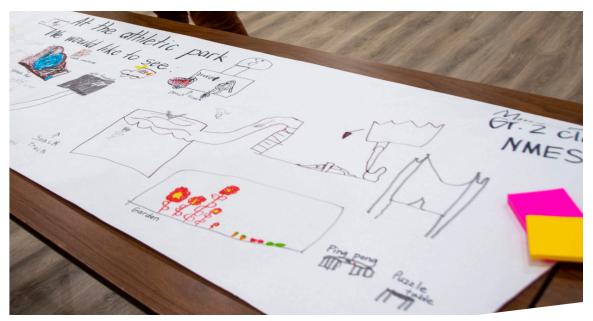
#### **Park Amenities**

Storage is a major issue that constrains recreation groups ability to use the park. Groups have discussed how a storage bunker would be a great solution that could be shared by multiple user groups, with allocated shelving and space for each park activity. Any storage facility would need to be centrally located, secure, and big enough to accommodate a variety of athletic gear.

The lack of water fountains was flagged by most user groups as a major deficiency at Athletic Park, and that these are a necessary amenity for physical activity.

Lighting was mentioned multiple times. Recreation user groups believe that if more lighting were to be installed at the Athletic

Proactive stakeholders: a Grade 2 class of the New Maryland Elementary School created a poster as part of the recreation user group consultations.



Park, this would present opportunities to increase recreation capacity and enable new types of recreation programming to be offered, such as adult sport leagues. Lighting was also identified as an important consideration for improving safety and reducing crime at the park.

Washrooms were mentioned multiple times, and the lack of public washrooms in the park was identified as being particularly problematic. The nearest washroom is on school property, and a considerable distance away from many of the park facilities, creating accessibility challenges. There were suggestions that washroom facilities could be built into a structure that also accommodates equipment storage. One user commented that vandalism needs to be considered when planning for an outdoor washroom.

Signage was mentioned multiple times. Users think that better trail mapping and signage would be a great addition to Athletic Park. Signage indicating the hours that the school playground is open to the public was suggested, as currently there are people who attempt to use the playground during school hours.

Parking was raised as another concern. It was noted that there is insufficient parking available at Athletic Park, resulting in frequent usage of the school parking lot. One recreation group also discussed how Athletic Park is not accessible via public transportation, which limits many people's ability to access the park. Seating was mentioned by some users. Picnic tables, park benches, and bleachers around the basketball and volleyball courts were suggested as features to add. Users also described how shade is an important consideration for the park, particularly at the baseball dugout and field.

#### Upgrades

Some of the existing park amenities require repairs, upgrades, or other changes in order for them to be usable.

One of the baseball fields is sized for Major League Baseball, which was identified as being too large for the users who want to play baseball in New Maryland. It was suggested that a U18 ball field would be more suitable. The existing ball field also needs to be regraded, as it is currently sloping and has big dips in certain areas.

One of the soccer fields was also identified as being too small. It currently measures 90 metres by 56 metres, whereas a standard field should be 125 metres by 80 metres.

The basketball courts are in relatively good condition. However, there are patches of the court pavement that could be improved.

Surface of the basketball court in Athletic Park.



Some users also commented on the park path, suggesting that paving it would be an improvement for accessibility, and would provide a safe area for children to rollerblade. One user also described how the path should be plowed in the winter to ensure it is remains usable year-round.

#### **Recreation Programming**

There were several comments related to recreation programming offered by the Village. There is a general sense that programming caters mostly to young children and seniors, and that there is very little offered for teenagers and adults. Particularly in Athletic Park, most of the activities and recreation services offered are geared towards children. Users think that it would be a welcomed addition to see new structures and programming for adults. There were also some suggestions for programming that the Village could offer, such as ultimate frisbee, tai-chi, and more all-ages events.

#### **Recreation Capacity**

Recreation is growing in New Maryland. Most user groups commented that their recreation groups are at full capacity, and that many of them have a waitlist. Many groups have an interest in growing their programs; however, this is often not feasible due to space constraints at Athletic Park. Many groups commented on the growing population of children in New Maryland, and how many of the recreation groups are unable to keep up with demand for their programs. There was discussion about how there is demand for an additional baseball field, a running track, and pickleball courts.

Many recreation groups would like to start hosting tournaments, or promote more competitive sport teams in New Maryland. Although there is significant interest, it is not currently feasible without infrastructure upgrades to Athletic Park.

#### Safety

Some users discussed aspects of safety as part of the Athletic Park redevelopment. There have been issues regarding loitering, vandalism, and other crime at Athletic Park and New Maryland School in the evenings. Users expressed how there needs to be some consideration of safety features in the park that will reduce this type of activity.



Poison Ivy growing along the perimetre of Athletic Park.

### 5 Design Workshop

#### 5.1 Approach

The Design Workshop was hosted on October 13, 2022 at the New Maryland Centre. The well-advertised event had been previously promoted through posters in various municipal buildings, flyers, the municipal web site, social media and gateway bill boards at the entrance to the Village.

Municipal Council, staff and 10 residents participated in this event. The purpose of the workshop was to start conversations about the community's vision for the future of Athletic Park. It was also an opportunity for residents to meet the project team inperson and to share design ideas through hands-on activities that were customized for this project. The workshop employed the following engagement formats:

Public presentation: The project team opened the event with a presentation which served as an introduction to the evening and provided information about the Athletic Park redevelopment project.

Workshop participants were given background information about the project and the park, the framework for the evening and the expected project outcomes. A question and answer period allowed for an initial exchange at that point.

Advertisement of the Athletic Park Design Workshop at gateway signage.



Workshop participant applying dot stickers to the 'dotmocracy' boards.



+ 'Dotmocracy' boards: This engagement tool allowed workshop participants to show their preference for possible park features. Each participant was given a set of dot stickers and was asked to place a sticker next to each of the presented park elements that they liked. A set of park activities, features, and other design elements were displayed on the wall, and participants were asked to rank them.

The purpose of this exercise was to visualize an average participants' preference related to priorities of some park features over others. Table 3 shows which park features were assigned the most 'dots' by the workshop attendees.

+ Design Charette: This was the most interactive part of the workshop. Residents were asked to model their desired Athletic Park on a large printed map using paper cut-outs of park features (such as baseball diamonds, trees, soccer fields, etc.). The miniature park features were dimensioned to the scale of the map, so that participants were able to get a realistic idea of field dimensions and the available space for redevelopment in the park. LEGO® bricks were also made available to enable attended to build small structures and landscape features.

The project team interacted with the public through this exercise, observed the discussions between residents and took notes of the main ideas that were floated in this process. The purpose of this exercise was to gain a deeper understanding of participants' design preferences for the park.

#### 5.2 Results

#### Park features

The most popular park features among workshop participants emerged for future design consideration. Most frequently mentioned items were washrooms, additional night-time lighting and a multi-purpose track for walking and running. These mentions were followed by another group of elements including pickleball courts, a splashpad and a form of picnic tables or resting areas. After these top six mentions, there seems to be less consensus about other park features and the table below lists other miscellaneous features that received some levels of support. Among these items, shading structures protecting park goers from the summer heat appear to be the most desirable feature to be considered in future park improvements.

Table 3. List of park features supported through the 'dotmocracy' exercise, in order of frequency.

Park feature	# of mentions
Washrooms	12
More Lighting	12
Walking / Running Track	11
Pickleball courts	9
Splashpad	8
Picnic Tables / Rest Areas	8
Shade Structures	6
Fitness	4
Bigger batting cage	4
Outdoor Rink	4
Refurbish tennis and volleyball courts	3
Water fountains	3
Dog Park	2

Park feature	# of mentions
Benches	2
Outdoor Storage	2
Ping Pong Table	1
Community Art Space	1
Lights on Bantam Field	1
Snow fence for division of baseball fields	1
Screening from residential buildings	1

Presentation of the proposed park design as composed at one of the group tables.



Conversations about park features and their locations during the design charette.



#### Feature mapping

Workshop participants chose their seating at the design charette in a way that resulted in two tables attended by residents and members of the project team as well as a third table with municipal officials. Since the main purpose of the workshop was to receive public feedback, the evaluation of this exercise focuses on the tables with public attendance, named 'Table A' and 'Table B' in the following.

Both groups placed a small, multi-purpose building with washrooms, changing rooms and storage space in the northwestern end of the park, where it is close to the 'peewee' baseball field and the smaller sports courts. The location of the building could be either between the 'peewee' and soccer fields, or in the vicinity of the beach volleyball court according to both groups.

Another common idea at both tables was to designate free space in the eastern corner of the park—between the soccer field and the newly constructed walking path to Alban Street—for a new park feature. This area currently covered by lawn was earmarked for a skate park at Table A and for a dog park at Table B.

Independently of each other, both tables also realized that the current placement of the basketball and tennis courts does not optimally utilize the space in the park, and that an alignment at right angles to the property lines will work more efficiently. Both groups see a future for refurbished tennis, basketball courts and newly introduced pickleball courts in the park. Although the placement of these courts slightly differed between the two tables, both groups decided to generally place these facilities close to their current location, i.e. along the lot line between the park and school properties. Table B also envisioned a splash pad within this area.

Participants of the workshop were told that the Village does not foresee to move the 'peewee' base ball and soccer fields in the near future, which is why there were few suggestions for that area of the park. Table A suggested that the soccer field's surface should be changed to artificial turf.

Both groups designed a running track in Athletic Park: Table A drew such a track around the soccer field and Table B around the entire perimeter of the park.

The main difference between both suggested park layouts consisted in the treatment of the larger 'bantam' baseball field. Table B opted to retain that field in its current form, and to suggest the application of snow fencing to flexibly divide the area into smaller junior game fields as needed. The landscaping and placemaking focus was placed on the central gravel path within this group.

Table A chose a very different approach by entirely dedicating the 'bantam' field to other recreational purposes. Arguing that there are baseball fields in other parks of New Maryland, this group repurposed the field's space for passive recreational features including landscaping and seating opportunities as well as splash pad and outdoor gym installations. Basketball courts would also take up parts of that space, making room for a large skating rink that can double for ball hockey games during the summer.



Design charette results from 'Table A' (above) and 'Table B' (below).



## 6 Outlook

#### 6.1 Summary

The public consultation on the redevelopment of Athletic Park was a vitally important dialogue that offered many insights on the recreational needs of the community.

Several consultation methods were chosen to engage Village residents in productive discussions about the park. The main themes of feedback received were largely consistent across all consultation methods.

The message from residents can generally be divided into two categories. The first of these is not necessarily calling for sports facilities, but is more so concerned with getting the basics of the park right. Fundamental amenities such as washrooms, changing rooms, water fountains and storage space are top of mind for residents. There is also a clear desire for aesthetic improvements to the park such as landscaped walkways that can be combined with passive recreation features such as seating and picnic areas. Since a big share of the sports programming in the park is geared towards children and youth, these amenities would give parents an opportunity to watch their children play sports in a more pleasant setting. Related to landscape improvements is a call for better lighting, which is expected to improve safety in the park at night.

The second category of feedback is related to new or improved recreational features. Many different outdoor facilities were mentioned as welcome additions to the park or as required refurbishments. There is a wide range of opinions about priorities since as all participants of the



Ball hockey setup on public street next to Athletic Park.

engagement process have their favourite sports. However, one discernible pattern appears to be a guiding theme through many responses: residents would like to widen the age spectrum of potential park users and see active recreation facilities for some of New Maryland's youngest residents (e.g. a splash pad) as well as facilities popular among older residents (e.g. pickle ball courts or an outdoor exercise circuit).

Sports programs for children and teenagers currently form the core of community life in Athletic Park and require suitable, highquality facilities to maintain New Maryland's appeal as a family-friendly Village. Soccer, basketball, and baseball programs need support to continue their successful operations. Newly requested sports facilities for youth programming prominently include a simple running path and a dedicated skating rink that can be used for ball hockey outside of the winter season.

A few frequently mentioned amenities on the wish list of New Maryland's residents are presumably unrealistic or problematic, but still need to be acknowledged. These requests include a public swimming pool, a dog park, and a skate park. The former of these three requests is unlikely to be feasible for New Maryland's municipal budget. Opinions on the latter two items appear to be very divided. While some residents mentioned these items as desired facilities, other participants of the engagement process have clearly spoken out against the integration of a dog park or skate park in New Maryland Athletic Park.

#### 6.2 Next Steps

The high degree of residents' participation in the consultation phase of this project revealed comprehensive insights on the recreation needs and preferences of the local community. The knowledge gained through this process will be combined with the analysis from the Background Report and applied to the design phase of this project. A draft of the proposed future park design will be presented in early 2023.

Dut door rink state in wista ball rockey in summer

UPLAND REConsulting Group