



VICTORIA PARK Master Plan

OCTOBER 2011.

Prepared for: **The City of Owen Sound**



Prepared by: **Benj Art Inc.**
Landscape Architects & Contractors





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Introduction

The 15.7 hectare site of Victoria Park, located upon the East Hill of Owen Sound, provides a unique site for specialized recreational facilities and services which are accessible to users throughout the city and beyond. This park has great potential to play a key role within Owen Sound's public green space network, and presents a extraordinary branding opportunity for the city to capitalize upon given the site's central location.

Benj Art Inc. Landscape Architects & Contractors has worked closely with both the City and the community of Owen Sound, to create an achievable long term vision for the park. In keeping with the recommendations of the City's Official Plan, Strategic Plan and Recreation, Parks & Facilities Master Plan it is the goal of this document to establish the framework for development by proposing design solutions that respond to the key opportunities afforded by the site. It should be noted that this Master Plan includes proposals for both the main, upper portion of the site; and lower section of the park (also known as St George's Park) - and that for the purposes of this document the entire area shall be referred to as Victoria Park.



Image source: www.owensound.ca

Due for completion in the Spring of 2012, the new Regional Recreation Centre will become the central element of the park. The Rec Centre presents a hub for the community providing facilities and opportunities that will encourage a healthy, active lifestyle for people of all ages. This central core of activity will be a key stimulus to the new identity and function of Victoria Park, and a catalyst for change in community ownership, appreciation and enjoyment of this unique public green space.

The Recreation, Parks & Facilities Master Plan outlines the importance of both *active* and *passive* outdoor recreational space as being beneficial to "the physical, social, cultural and economic well being of a community and enhanc[ing] the overall quality of life for [the] residents." While Victoria Park has in the past been primarily a place for sports/recreational activities, there also exists potential to utilize the park for a variety of other passive uses, and thus make it a space for all to enjoy.



Park History

Victoria Park was donated by the government to the people of Owen Sound in 1842, and was formerly known as 'The Pleasure Grounds' (a term commonly given to parks during the Victorian era, that differed from other public gardens in that they contained entertainments in addition to planting). The site has seen a rich history of recreation and amusements over the years - including horse races, balloon ascensions, baseball games, Highland Games (some of the earliest in the Ontario), parades, celebrations, bicycle races, snowmobile races, daredevil stunts, athletic events and various sports matches and festivals/fairs. While the functions and requirements of the park evolved it has always provided an essential urban green space, celebrated by the city.



Image source: www.owensound.library.on.ca

Owen Sound Fall Fair

One of the most significant yearly events held at the park, the Fall Fair has been an integral part of the local cultural history since 1852. Possibly one of the oldest Fall Fairs in the province, it has evolved over the years to include more entertainment and amusements in addition to the agricultural aspects, and will continue to play an important role in the future of the park.

Local Black History

John "Daddy" Hall (1783-1900) was the first Black settler in the area. He cleared a plot of land on what is today's Victoria Park and constructed a log shanty for a home. Daddy maintained "squatter's rights" to his land until his death in 1900. As the town crier for almost 50 years, he was a popular and well-known figure in the community. He announced auction sales, upcoming court cases, entertainments, and the day's news. This background should be recognized through the inclusion of Victoria Park within the already established Freedom Trail historical route, and the addition of appropriate interpretive signage boards.



Image source: www.osblackhistory.com

While no specific reports pertaining to aboriginal history on the site were found, any such evidence brought forward should be honored through inclusion within interpretive signage/sculpture .



Project Background

In October 2010 Benj Art Inc. was retained by the City of Owen Sound to begin preparation of a Master Plan for Victoria Park, to coincide with the city's Official Plan, Strategic Plan and Recreation, Parks & Facilities Plan. The goals of this Master Plan are to establish the framework for development and propose design solutions that respond to the key opportunities afforded by the site, while establishing the new Regional Recreational Centre within the wider urban fabric.

Benj Art Inc's initial proposal outlined an approach to the design and analysis of the park centered around a "bands of influence" concept. This concept highlighted six key influences upon the site - **Cultural, Natural, Recreational, Historical, Agricultural** and **Visual**, that embrace the new Regional Recreational Centre as the park's core component. Not only has this concept of ribbons/bands inspired the proposed design for the park, it has also adhered to the following goals outlined in the Strategic Plan:

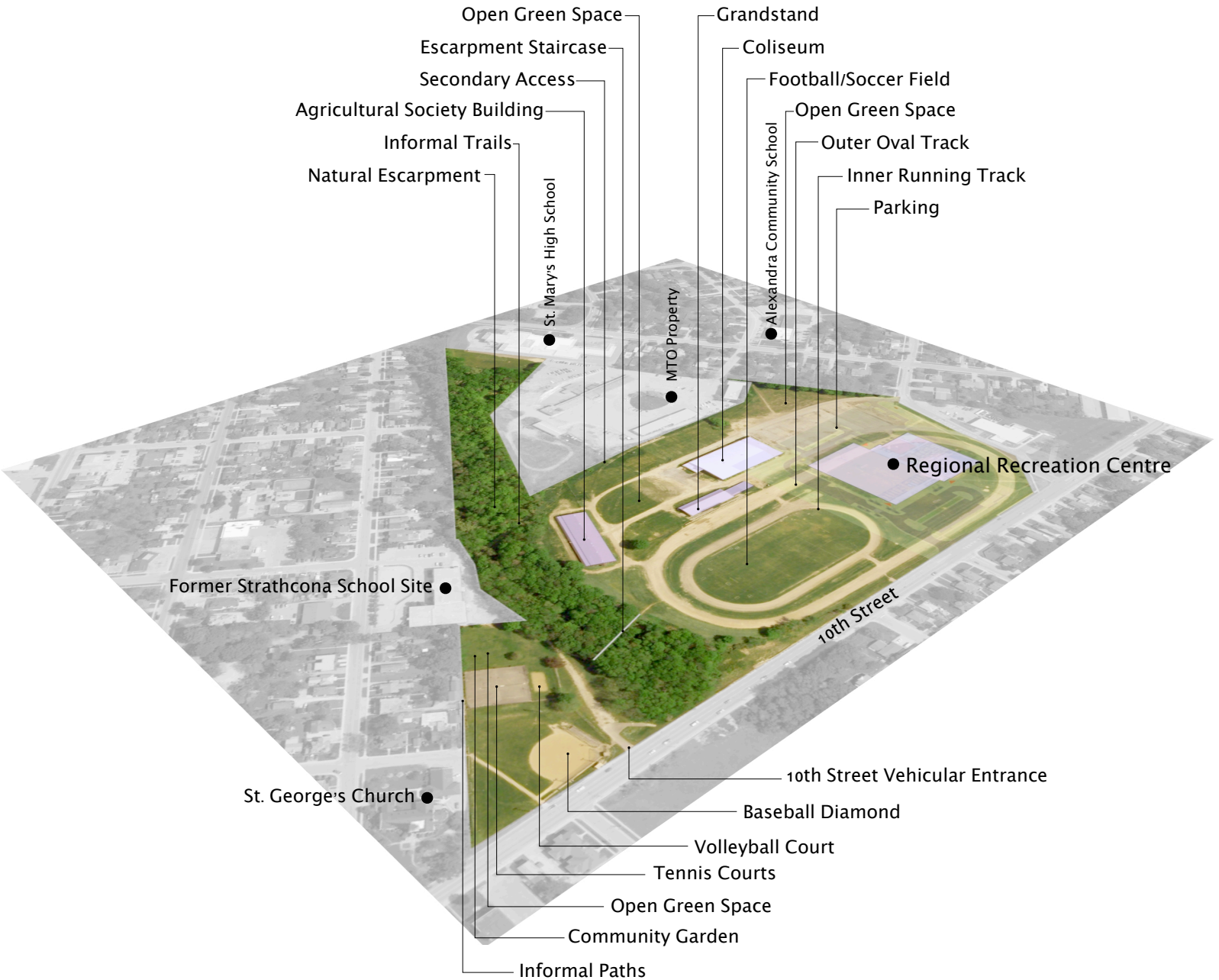
- *The City should give high priority to the implementation of plans aimed at enhancing and revitalizing the City's Downtown Core.*
- *The City should promote culture as an important element of the City's "quality of life".*
- *The city should maximize the potential of City green space and parkland environment.*
- *The City should provide a range of recreation opportunities for the community.*
- *The city should give greater emphasis to preserving and celebrating its unique history through architectural preservation and historical interpretation.*
- *The City should identify itself as the hub for agricultural based business and market its agricultural assets and opportunities.*

In addition the park Master Plan strives to:

- Recognize the complexity of existing uses and examine their continuing suitability at this location.
- Consider suitability for proposed future uses.
- Strengthen and enhance the natural characteristics of the site.
- Respond accordingly to the new Regional Recreation Centre and its functions.



Existing Features





Inventory, Assessment & Design Opportunities

Escarpment Staircase

The primary access to the upper portion of the site from the downtown area is via this flight of steps. While the proposed road widening on the North side of 10th Street will provide a much improved route for both pedestrians and cyclists, the staircase will likely continue as the main walking route to the Rec Centre from areas West of the escarpment slope.

This route would benefit greatly from selective removal of some adjacent vegetation, to open up the space (especially around the top and bottom landings) and thus make them more inviting/visible to users. Lower shrub/groundcover planting could be planted along the edges to discourage unwanted traffic on the slope and to limit erosion. Lighting would also make this a more hospitable route during night hours. The staircase structure itself is in need of repair, some of the concrete piers are showing signs of stress and several timber treads require replacing. It may be advisable to replace the entire structure and/or have a full engineering report conducted in the near future.



Image source: Benj Art Inc.



Oval Track

With the siting of the new Rec Centre building, the former oval race track (used for horse races & snowmobile races) is no longer usable in its present form. While the track facilitates key events and has been a central element of the park for many years, it severely impedes circulation within the site and occupies a large amount of space. With the new Rec Centre it cannot continue to function as it was intended. It would however be beneficial to perhaps retain a section of the track as a monument/relic to the history of events held here, with possible incorporation of sculpture and/or other artifacts.

Grandstand

With the removal of the oval track, the location of the existing grandstand requires review. It will most likely be too far from the sports field to be practical as spectator seating for Football/Soccer events. The structure itself is in need of repair and is visually unappealing, especially as such a central element to the park. However this structure does provide elevated views of the site and surrounding cityscape and is used frequently by visitors to the park as a place to sit.



Image source: Benj Art Inc.

Benj Art Inc. proposes a new smaller Grandstand of approx. 1000 seats be built closer to the sports field. In addition to this, space should be allocated along the North side of the sports field to allow for the easy set up of portable bleachers during key events. Such movable seating could be easily repositioned to other areas within park (i.e. Skate/Bike Park) should events there require additional spectator seating. Extra informal spectator space is also provided for, along the proposed sloped turf berm surrounding portions of the running track/sports field. There is an opportunity for the new Grandstand structure to be designed with additional storage/space underneath, for use by the Agricultural Society as storage and/or potential revenue (as per existing facilities).

Relocating the main Grandstand also opens up a key east-west axis through the park, something Benj Art Inc. sees as a key opportunity for the new park (see Central Promenade).



Sports Field / Running Track

The existing turf sports field is used currently for Football, Soccer, Rugby and other events by various user groups. It functions well in its current location and provides additional open space for use during events. The field's current drainage works well. Currently the primary users of this facility are St. Mary's High School & Bluewater District School Board (regular use and regional track meets etc). These stakeholders have expressed that this is an important facility to them, and highlighted some issues - specifically that access in



Image source: Benj Art Inc.

Spring is limited due to moist conditions, fertilization/repair of turf, and that the field can at times be unusable following heavy use for other events. It may therefore be worth considering the suitability of an artificial turf surface and/or rubberized running track should a shared use/costing agreement between the school boards and city be reached. This, along with floodlighting, would extend the use into the Spring/Fall seasons. More careful programming of events may also help to avoid potential conflicts, and provide more revenue to the city.

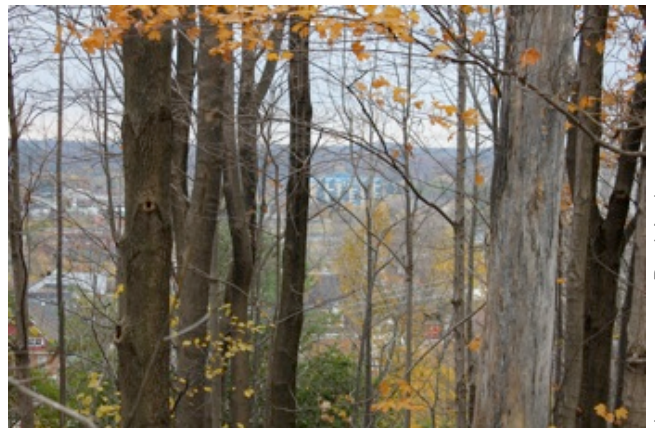


Natural Escarpment

The wooded slope on the western portion of the site consist of mixed woodland and understory groundcover, that separates the upper and lower portions of the site. This natural band through the park is iconic of The Bruce Peninsula and presents an essential resource to the character of the park and the downtown proximity. While the utmost care should be taken to preserve this resource, the site would benefit incredibly from the select removal of some trees (unhealthy specimens and invasive species such as Manitoba Maples etc) to open up view to the city's landmarks. If the City sees fit, this should be done in conjunction with the GSCA tree removal guidelines. Potentially impressive views to the downtown, harbour and Georgian Bay exist that should be capitalized upon to visually link Victoria Park to the wider landscape.



Potential view to the cityscape below. (From Southwest corner, above 10th Street retaining wall).



View through the trees in Fall. (Minimal removal of mature trees required to establish key views).

Image source: Benj Art Inc.

The Coliseum

While the initial RFP for this Master Plan called for functional review of the Coliseum, a resolution was adopted on May 31st 2011 by the City of Owen Sound to demolish the Coliseum (through a public tender process) following the opening of the ice pads within the new Rec Centre. An assessment of the concrete slab on grade was conducted Jan 31, 2011 by Gamsby and Mannerow Limited.

(See Appendix item ¹ for details).



Baseball Diamond

The existing baseball diamond situated on the lower portion of the site (St George's Park) is a well used facility. The diamond's current location however severely restricts access and views into the park with it's required screens and chain link fencing. Relocating this facility elsewhere in the park or city, would allow the potential to use this space as a key link to the downtown sector. The City may also wish to consider whether or not this facility would be better suited elsewhere (i.e. closer to other existing ball diamonds).

Tennis & Volleyball Courts

These rarely used facilities have remained in a state of disrepair for some time. During the public consultation process no motion was brought forward pertaining to a current demand for these facilities at this location. The Recreation, Parks & Facilities Master Plan identifies that the current supply of Tennis courts is more than adequate for the City's population, and as such replacement of the tennis courts at St. Georges Park is not currently required.

Entrance / Presence

Currently entrances to the park (on both upper and lower tiers) are ill defined. A re-imagination of the park's multiple entrance areas can serve to draw people into the park, and can be an attractive feature to all modes of traffic, be it vehicular, bicycle or pedestrian. Likewise the re-establishment / improvement of key pedestrian routes within the park will strengthen ties to the wider urban fabric. Benj Art Inc. propose a strong hierarchy of gateway structures and sculptural elements be located at key entrance points and nodal areas with the park to strengthen the legibility of entrances and routes. Sculptural features and/or artifactual elements from the park's history (such as re-used building materials from the Coliseum) could be used to establish this presence and entrench the site with history, while providing a sense of identity to the park.

Trails/Linkages

Potential for physical connections to the existing trail networks within Owen Sound and beyond (such as the Tom Thomson Trail) are also prevalent and would allow the site to act as a gateway to the downtown area and a key 'green' route to/from the new Regional Recreation Centre and other recreational facilities (i.e. Bayshore Community Centre & Park and the Airtime Bike Park). Various informal pathways also exist (i.e. along the existing fence line atop escarpment slope & at north-east corner of site). It would be worth



formalizing these trails through provision of suitable surface and signage, as they indicate a definitive pattern of usage by people requiring access & routes through the park that are not currently provided for.

Sculpture & Signage

In understanding Owen Sound's strong artistic community, we feel there is an opportunity for the integration of outdoor public art and sculpture within the park, and an opportunity to form associations with other groups/organizations such as the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery. As previously stated these sculptural elements would also form key landmarks through the site and enhance the visual character of the park.

Signage could play a key role in the park's identity and inform on both natural and cultural history, and itself form sculptural elements - i.e. decorative signage displays.

In consultation with Virginia Eichhorn of the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, considerable interest was expressed on behalf of the gallery, for the integration of a potential sculpture park at Victoria Park.



Public Consultation

Below is a summary of the feedback and responses from the community and stakeholders. This feedback was collected through both a public visioning meeting and a questionnaire collected from members of the public and stakeholder groups.

(For minutes from the Visioning Meeting, and a list of those in attendance see Appendix items ² & ³)

- *Provide better facilities for existing uses, and cater for new uses (e.g. Skate Park) and new events (e.g. concerts, markets, fairs and other cultural happenings).*
- *Examine suitability of existing uses/facilities and consider relocating elsewhere if appropriate.*
- *Encourage better scheduling/programming of events to avoid conflicts arising on multi-use facilities (e.g. damage to sports fields).*
- *Examine the possibility of constructing an artificial turf field to increase usage earlier and later in the season.*
- *Relocate/replace grandstand closer to the field.*
- *Provide shade/shelter for relief to sports field users.*
- *Provide water fountains.*
- *Provide change/shower facilities.*
- *Provide storage facilities for various local teams/user groups to store commonly used items (e.g. soccer nets, post pads for rugby, line flags, line painter etc)*
- *Introduce interpretive/way-finding signage to delineate routes and “add to the culture of the city”.*
- *Improve site access & circulation routes for both pedestrians and bicyclists.*
- *Establish a ‘zig-zag’ path to allow bicyclists (& pedestrians) easier access up the steep slope.*



- *Establish a planting buffer between sports field and 10th street to reduce noise, and stop balls going over fence.*
- *Improve sidewalk along 10th Street.*
- *Provide picnic shelter structure.*
- *Encourage new educational opportunities through the development of environmental study areas, spaces conducive to learning, and Special Needs space (e.g. sensory experiences.)*
- *Encourage passive uses through the development of spaces for reflection, prayer, study and the appreciation of nature.*
- *Encourage continuation of agricultural fair usage.*
- *Provide additional parking and examine suitability of 'green' (non-asphalt) type parking.*
- *Retain perimeter fence to allow for secure, ticketed events.*
- *Encourage new uses on the existing escarpment/slope (e.g. tobogganing, snowboard park, ski/bike trails)*
- *Encourage re-use of select components from the Coliseum.*
- *Improve trails and linkages to local/regional trail network.*
- *Encourage more events and activities during winter months.*

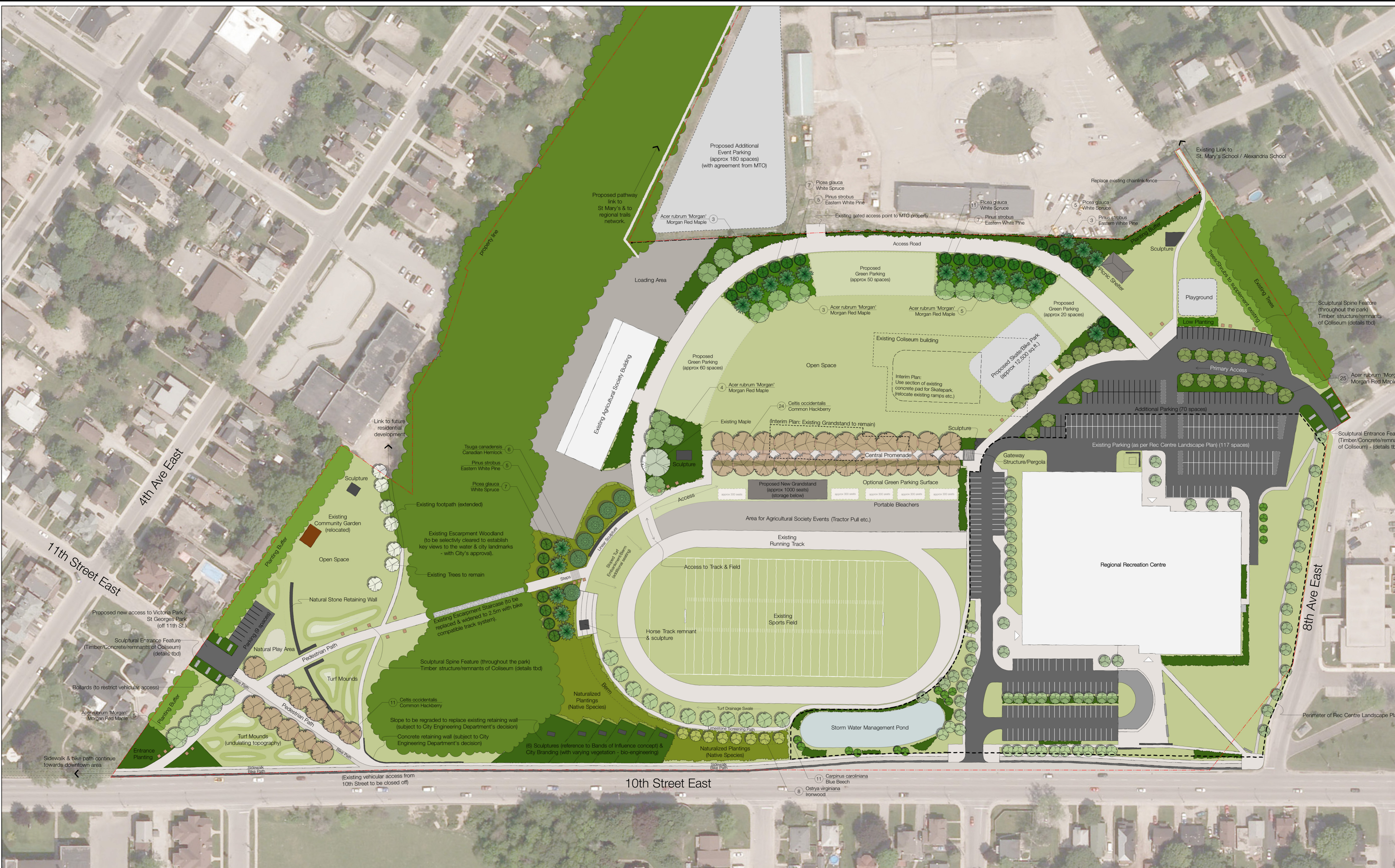
On September 22nd 2011, a preliminary design was presented at an Open House / Public Meeting. For minutes of this meeting, a list of those in attendance, and a summary of feedback from community responses to the preliminary design questionnaire, see Appendix items ⁴, ⁵ & ⁶.



Victoria Park Master Plan - Drawing

See attached 11x17 Drawing.

(Note: Drawing not to scale at this reduced size).



PROJECT NAME.
VICTORIA PARK
MASTER PLAN

PROJECT No. 1079

CLIENT.
The City of Owen Sound

DRAWING TITLE.
MASTER PLAN

NOTES.

- This plan remains the property of the Landscape Architect. Changes or use of the plan for purposes other than its intended use requires the permission of the Landscape Architect in writing.
- The agreement between the client & the Landscape Architect does not create any right or benefits for parties other than the consultant & the client.

DESIGN BY. BA, LW

DRAWN BY. LW

DATE. 17 OCT 2011

SCALE. 1:750 @ 24" x 42"

N.

DWG No. MP-1

FILE. Victoria Park Masterplan OCT11.pdf

REV.

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BENJ ART INC.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS & CONTRACTORS



Master Plan Site Features Summary

The overall vision for Victoria Park, was developed based on the requirements of the community the result of a detailed assessment of the opportunities afforded by the site itself.

The following summary references the final vision of the park, as illustrated in the Master Plan drawing (see page 14).

Entrances

- Existing vehicular entrance to lower tier of park removed from 10th Street, and relocated to 11th Street East.
- Main vehicular entrance to the North, Rec Centre parking area - established at 8th Ave East entrance.
- Both the above entrances are to be visually formalized, with the inclusion of feature sculptural elements. (See Sculptural Spine / Entrance Features). Lends character to the site and adds presence to these key access points.
- Prominent signage (possibly incorporated within above features) to be included at both entrances.
- Pedestrian entrances to lower tier (St George's Park) and at North East corner of site also to be formalized with signage and pathway improvements, and entrance features.

Parking

- In addition to parking spaces proposed within Rec Centre plans, 70 extra spaces shall be included North of the Rec Centre building. (53 of these spaces fills the City's requirements for the Rec Centre). Trees and other planting are proposed to buffer adjacent park areas (Skate/Bike Park & Playground), and provide some greenery on an otherwise large area of asphalt.
- 9 parking spaces are to be provided at the proposed 11th Street Entrance to the lower tier (St. George's Park) - allowing access to passive recreational areas of the park. Bollards are proposed to restrict vehicular access to pedestrian/bike path.

Central Promenade

- This treed allée will form a core component to the site, acting as a central circulation route and a hub/meeting place (with proposed Pergola structure at the Eastern end).
- It will act as the central focus of the park, giving identity, and a providing formal space for use during events such as the Fall Fair, and other cultural/festival events.
- Lighting integrated, through uplighting of trees.



Access Road & Green Parking

- Green surface parking areas (approx 130 spaces total) accessed via an 8m wide roadway (suitable for large transport trucks). These parking facilities provide additional spaces usable for Fall Fair & other events requiring additional parking at the Rec Centre or Victoria Park. The wide roadway provides access to the Agricultural Society building, Grandstand and Running Track, for both transport trucks (during event use) and necessary emergency/fire access.
- Green surface type parking using concrete unit 'turf-stone' or high density polyethylene grid type products can provide an ideal solution to more parking space (required during events etc) without detracting from the park's natural feel. These products offer an alternative to traditional parking materials and form a significantly tougher surface than turf alone.
- Native tree groupings will be used to screen the property to the north, while providing a natural sense of structure to the central, open green space.
- Chain-link fence to be replaced along North property boundary.

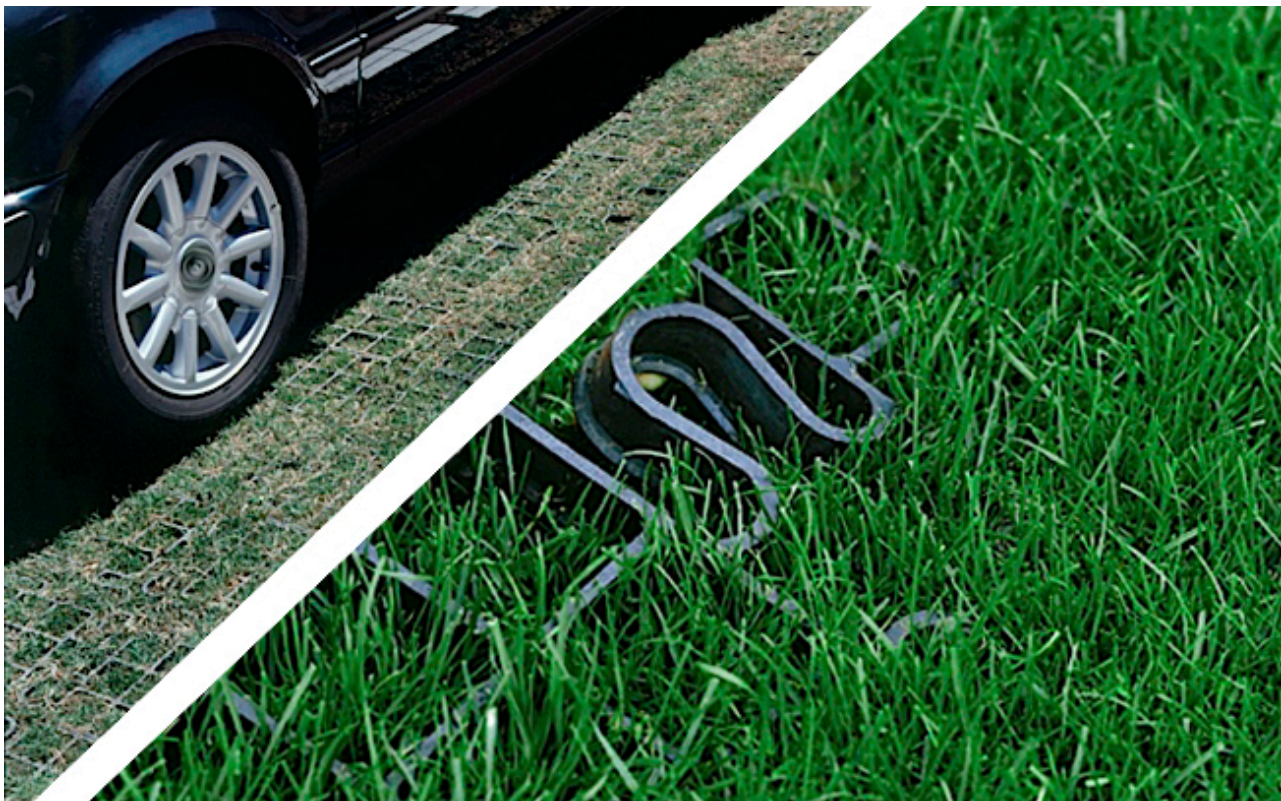


Image source: www.groundsolutions.ca

An example of a 'green-parking' product, consisting of a polyethylene grid in conjunction with turf or aggregate surface. Provides a free-draining surface durable enough to absorb heavy loads.



Agricultural Society

- The Agricultural Society's usage of the park is of continuing, central importance to the park.
- Existing barn/storage building will remain and (should a new grandstand be constructed) replacement storage space shall be integrated to allow revenue generation etc. (as per existing uses).
- The section of the Oval track used for Tractor Pull event shall be retained or relocated on the site at a similar size.

Grandstand

- A structural review should be conducted on existing Grandstand. (Agricultural Society are currently involved with this process).
- If a replacement Grandstand is proposed it should be sited as shown, closer to the sports field and centered at mid-field.
- Replacement grandstand should incorporate integrated storage space.
- Space is provided for supplementary portable bleachers (to be supplied for larger events, as/when required).

Berm / Naturalized Area

- Turf Embankment / Berm provides additional, informal seating on periphery of sports field.
- Acts as a physical barrier between 10th Street and the sports field to help with noise reduction and stop balls going out of bounds.
- Backside of berm to be planted with native shrubs & trees. Entire area to be naturalized.
- All regrading to tie-in with existing drainage patterns on site, and with future road allowance work.

Sports Field

- Existing sports field to remain.
- If cost/shared use agreements are reached and the usage increases, the City should examine the suitability/cost of an artificial turf field, with a rubberized running track. This would form additional regional level recreation opportunities.

Playground & Picnic Shelter

- Playground and Picnic shelter are proposed for the space north of the Rec Centre parking.



- In conjunction with the proposed shelter, the open space in this area is well suited to use by schools, groups and camps for a variety of activities.

Skate / Bike Park

- A 12,500 sq.ft. space is proposed in a central location, north of the Rec Centre. This location was chosen for its proximity to high use areas, for passive surveillance; ease of access for emergency vehicles; suitable distance from neighbouring residential properties; and proximity to parking. The skate/bike park is also sited with surrounding open space, to allow flexibility of options for integrative design as and when the skate/bike park moves into the next design stage. (See Skate/Bike Park Report on page 26, for further details).
- An interim solution, utilizing existing concrete pad of the Coliseum for current modular skate/bike park features is proposed. The location of the proposed skate/bike park would allow for continuing function of this interim solution, while a new park is constructed.
- It is proposed that any new skate/bike park be designed on a way that integrates well with the surrounding landscape design, and incorporates sculptural type skateboard features that lend aesthetic qualities to Victoria Park as a whole.

Open Space

- Large central turf open space, is retained as multi-use recreational space, for informal play and leisure.
- Can be used for overflow/event parking (if required beyond provisions of dedicated Green Parking areas).

Pedestrian / Cycle Circulation

- Hierarchy of walkways/trails
 - Main Walkways: 5m wide - concrete/pavestone.
 - Secondary Walkway: 3m wide - asphalt/concrete
 - Tertiary Trails: 1.5m wide - limestone screenings.
 - Lighting recommended on Main and Secondary Walkways.
- Sculptural spine (remnants from the Coliseum) and/or way-finding signage used to establish focus and character along key routes.
- Road widening along 10th Street, allows for proposed Bike and Cycle path setback from the road (i.e. min 1m wide boulevard between path and vehicular roadway).
- The proposed 10th Street sidewalks/bike paths will link into the lower area (St. Georges Park.) and connect to the harbour area via the proposed 11th Street entrance.



Escarpment Staircase

- Structural review required of current staircase, or replacement (new structure) to accommodate bicycles with bike compatible track system. (See image below).
- Additional landings and wider stairway required.
- Lighting recommended.



Image source: City of Hamilton and the Hamilton and Region Conservation Authority

Potential design solution for escarpment stairway. 'Track' system along side of stairway allows for easier transport of bicycles up/down the stairs. An open grid type stair-tread allows for better traction.



St. George's Park

- Following proposed removal of the ball diamond, the space below the escarpment is freed up for a more passive recreational / reflective-use park. This compliments the character of the neighbouring churches and downtown area.
- Entrance feature planting & sculptural elements established at new pedestrian entrance, key access point from the downtown.
- Undulating turf mounds provide visual interest and informal play/seating features (while visually buffering the interior space from 10th Street).
- Natural stone retaining wall, iconic of the natural escarpment and the region's many stone quarries.
- 'Natural' play area with climbing features (boulders/natural stone).
- Planting buffer along boundary with neighbouring church & residential properties.
- Community garden to remain. (Possibly repositioned to allow for the continuation of proposed boundary planting buffer).
- Remove tennis courts & volleyball court as they are excessive to the City's requirements.
- Ball Diamond to be removed and if necessary relocated to alternative site.

Sculpture Park (City Branding)

- Sculpture Park, key areas are provided within the park for permanent sculpture display in collaboration with the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery.
- Sculptures provide landmark's throughout the park, that aid in the establishment of the site's character/ presence.
- Utilize the proposed sloped area along North side of 10th Street (subject to City Engineering Department's decision) for potential city branding opportunities, possibly incorporating specially commissioned sculpture installations.

Sculptural Spine / Entrance Features

- Sculptural elements (constructed from Coliseum remnants) will form a 'Sculptural Spine' throughout the park. These structures (incorporating pathway lighting) will delineate key routes within the park, and form a series of visually appealing elements, adding character to the park. Other remnants of the Coliseum should also be integrated to form entrance features, and gateway/landmarks structures within the park. Benj Art Inc. (with their strong sculptural background) have developed firm design direction on these features, and should be consulted at the detailed design stage.



General Recommendations

Additional Parking

- The City (in conjunction with the Agricultural Society's existing agreement) should discuss a shared-use agreement of the MTO property, as additional overflow parking space for large events at Victoria Park and the Rec Centre.

Accessibility

- Within the constraints afforded by the site's topography, apply universal design principles to create barrier free public space in accordance with all relevant provincial legislation.

Plantings

- Where possible, plant material should be native species.
- Plantings should be utilized for shade and spatial definition purposes (in accordance with the Master Plan).

Site Furnishings

- Develop a consistent theme for all site furniture within Victoria Park.
- Provide seating and trash/recycle bins that are durable, meet the needs of Park Operations and enhance the overall vision of the park.
- With the proximity of the proposed skate/bike park, furniture that dissuades unwanted use by skateboarders/bikers should be carefully selected.

Wayfinding Signage

- Consider a signage system that is changeable - to highlight specific areas during key events.
- Coordinate with citywide signage to highlight new/improved trail linkages through Victoria Park, direct to the park's proposed facilities.

Interpretive Signage

- Utilize interpretive signage displays (in keeping with the overall site furnishing theme) to identify key facts and stories from the park's cultural & natural history.
- Link the site as a new destination on the historical Freedom Trail.
- Commemorate the park's historical uses through signage displays and relevant sculptural elements.



Coliseum Demolition

- Prior to Coliseum demolition, detailed design for Entrance Features & Sculptural Spine should be completed, in order to identify desirable structural elements to be salvaged from the Coliseum.
- Tender should include salvage and storage of identified structural components, to be used in the future.
- Tender should also include proposed cutting and preparation of existing concrete pad (Interim solution for Skate/Bike park), and site rehabilitation.



Suggested Phasing & Capital Investment Plan - 10yrs

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. 2012-13 Parking & Entrance Feature / Sculptural Spine | \$450,000 |
| Extension of Rec Centre Parking (70 additional spaces), including sidewalk area on northern edge of parking. Detailed design for Entrance Features & Sculptural Spine. Install Entrance Features & beginning of Sculptural Spine/Lighting. | |
| 2. 2012 Relocate Existing Skate/Bike Park Equipment | \$2,500 |
| Relocate existing modular skate/bike park features to portion of the Coliseum's concrete pad (following building demolition & rehabilitation of site - as per General Recommendations on page 22). | |
| 3. 2013 General Site Maintenance | \$22,500 |
| Remove tennis courts & volleyball court & rehabilitate with seed/sod. Remove invasive tree species, open views on the escarpment slope (as approved by the City). | |
| 4. 2013-14 Detailed Park Design | \$405,000 |
| Detailed park design including Landscape Architectural, Engineering, and Electrical servicing. | |
| 5. 2014 Skate/Bike Park Design | \$56,250 |
| Skate/Bike Park Design - to be coordinated in conjunction with overall Park Detailed Design. | |
| 6. 2014 Escarpment Staircase | \$450,000 |
| Remove existing staircase. Design/Engineering of new structure. Install improved, wider stairway with bike compatible track system. | |
| 7. 2015 North East Corner of Park (Picnic Shelter/Playground) | \$172,500 |
| Planting buffer established along boundary with MTO property and residential properties to the East. Construct pathway, playground, picnic shelter, sculpture, regrade & seed/sod. | |
| 8. 2015 Skate/Bike Park Construction | \$577,000 |
| Install proposed skate/bike park. Decommission and rehabilitate area of modular skate/bike park. | |



9. 2016 Access Road / Green Parking	\$434,600
Install access road to west portion of park/Agricultural Society buildings/track. Install green parking surfaces adjacent to access road. Install tree/shrub planting. Install fence along north property boundary.	
10. 2017 Grading	\$466,500
Site grading around existing sports field. Removal of remaining section of Oval Track. Regrade area for new Grandstand. Install/grade berm & naturalized planting areas. Install pedestrian walkways, steps. Relocate area for Tractor Pull closer to running track. Keep horse track remnant and install commemorative sculpture, install linear sculpture.	
11. 2018 New Grandstand	TBD
Demolish/remove existing Grandstand (subject to consultant's report). Agricultural Society to construct new Grandstand in partnership with others as funding/grants become available. Portable bleachers to supplement permanent Grandstand (City to examine shared cost/use initiative).	
12. 2019 Central Promenade	\$231,600
Construction of Central Promenade, accompanying hardscape & tree/shrub plantings. Regrade & sod adjoining open space. Construct central pergola structure & two sculptures.	
13. 2020-21 St George's Park	\$473,750
Install 11th Street Entrance & Parking. Install Entrance Feature. Relocate Ball Diamond. Site grading. Install retaining wall, bike path, pedestrian pathways, turf mounds, buffer planting, natural play features and sculpture.	

NOTES:

- a. Phase implementation/timing to remain flexible if funding/grant opportunities become available.
- b. 10th Street road allowance widening - retaining wall vs. sloped area (as directed by City's Engineering Department).
- c. Item 13. St Georges Park - coordinate timing with City, and the 10th Street Road allowance work.
- d. Sculpture Park - Each sculpture installation (area) to be incorporated in conjunction with construction of that surrounding phase.
- e. Interpretive/wayfinding signage to be included as part of each construction phase.
- f. Sculptural Spine (remnants of the Coliseum structure) with integrated pathway lighting, to be included as part of each construction phase.



Operational Planning

Allocate appropriate operational funds to ensure that the following tasks are completed each year at Victoria Park:

- *Spring clean up*
- *Aeration, fertilization & topdressing of Sports Field and other turf areas (as required)*
- *Tree care and pruning (including Escarpment area should the City decide to open views through the woodland) (as required)*
- *Invasive and noxious weed removal (as required)*
- *Playground and Skate/Bike park inspections (weekly)*
- *Mowing (seasonally, as required)*
- *Garbage pick-up and removal (three times per week, or as required during special events)*
- *Repairs / general site maintenance (as required)*



Skate/Bike Park Suitability Study

As part of this Master Plan, Benj Art Inc. was asked to examine the suitability of Victoria Park as a new location for Owen Sound’s skate / bike park. These existing facilities at the the Getaway Sk8 Board Park on the West side of the city are to be relocated due to changing land-use requirements. Both skateboarding and BMX biking have developed locally and nationally as key recreational activities for youth, particularly for males 10-19 but is also popular for those in their twenties, and for females. The Recreation, Parks & Facilities Master Plan for Owen Sound recognizes this growing popularity and stipulates the importance of providing suitable, well maintained features that can be enjoyed by users of varying skill levels and physical ability.

Image source: www.skateparkcommittee.com



Definitions:

Skateboard / Bike Park

Smooth, hard surfaces with the provision of specially constructed ramps, quarter pipes, half-pipes, bowls, rails and other ‘rideable’ structures or sculptural elements suitable for freestyle tricks on a skateboard. Can also be used by BMX bikers and inline skaters.

It is important to examine the specific demands of the skate/bike community as the requirements for each style and skill level of skateboarding/biking are significantly different. The success or failure of the skate/bike park will depend largely on creating a facility that satisfies the users, allowing them to progress within the sport, and thus ensures long term use of the park.

While it is widely recognized that these facilities are essential to provide recreational opportunities to a key demographic, it is also important to examine the specific suitability of the selected site and ensure there are minimal conflicts between other user groups and neighbors to the park. In the past Owen Sound’s skate/bike provisions have been a source of considerable community pride. Likewise the potential addition of these facilities within Victoria Park, presents a key opportunity to develop community ownership and further establish the park as a recreational centre of regional significance.



General Recommendations on Skate/Bike Park Siting & Design

The site should **not** be located near neighboring residential properties, as noise and required flood-lighting could be an issue.

The site should be located near high-use areas to allow for passive surveillance/increased security.

The skate/bike park shall be located with adequate emergency vehicle access.

Adequate spectator space should be provided to facilitate potential competitions & events.

Comprehensive, well thought out design of the skate/bike park and surrounding area should be employed to prevent unwanted skater use of adjoining hardscape areas, and thus prevent potential conflicts with other park users.

Extensive discussions with the skateboarder/biker community should be conducted to provide the best possible mix of features that caters to the skill level of all users.

Employing the services of a professional skatepark design firm is essential to create a successful facility. Likewise any design teams involved should collaborate with Benj Art Inc. to integrate the skate/bike park effectively with the surrounding landscape design, and retain the overall design intent for Victoria Park.

Specifics

There is fairly even split of both skaters and bikers within the community of Owen Sound. The Getaway Sk8 Board Park has been used successfully by both BMX and skateboards and the design of the new skateboard park should aim to accommodate both user groups. Formed concrete type structures such as bowls, waves and various ramps are examples of particular features in demand by the local community. Currently the nearest facility of this kind is in Port Elgin. The initial construction cost of a fully concrete-feature skate/bike park is significantly higher than for a modular unit type facility. However there are important, long term cost implications and other issues to examine when comparing the two park types.



Below are some points worth considering in the comparison between an all-concrete park and a modular component park (such as those at existing facilities in Owen Sound).

- Pre-fab **modular** components are initially cheaper to purchase/construct.
- **Modular** components only require a flat concrete or asphalt surface, and can be easily removed should demand for their use decrease.
- A **modular** park can be added to at a later date and features can be moved around or supplemented with additional features. (Changes made should always be coordinated with the users to satisfy their specific demands).
- **Concrete** lasts significantly longer than modular components.
- The safety of a **concrete** park is enhanced by lack of screws and sharp edges that can cause injury.
- Maintenance of **concrete** features is greatly simplified. There are many examples of concrete parks that have been around for 30+ years.
- **Modular** components need to be checked frequently for loose screws and excessive wear.

Many communities have utilized modular parks as way of feeling out local demand for a skatepark, before proceeding with the longer term investment of a concrete construction. This may seem like an effective strategy, however it is worth noting that a concrete facility provides a significantly better and more diverse skating experience. It is most likely for example, that a concrete park of a 15,000 sq.ft will draw many more users than a modular park of 30,000 sq.ft. A well designed/constructed concrete skate/bike park of the proposed 12,500 sq.ft. at Victoria Park would serve as a regional level recreational facility.

Skatepark.org (a valuable online reference for anyone involved with the development/planning/funding of public skate parks) state that:

“Our experience indicates that a prefabricated skatepark as a “test” for a community is not always an accurate measure of need. ...[modular] ramps might be used to demonstrate to the larger community that a skatepark will be popular and ensure that an investment in a permanent concrete facility is warranted. The inverse of the this principle may also occur. A modular park may fail to sustain the interest of the users and produce unexpected maintenance demands that ultimately sour the community on the idea of future skatepark investments.”

Building a Skatepark: Modular or Concrete (an article published in Landscape Architecture Magazine in 2005 and referenced on Skatepark.org) offers valuable insight into the issues cited here, and has been included as an appendix to this document (see Appendix item ⁷).



Interim Solution

The benefits of a concrete park over a modular park are extensive for both long term costs and user satisfaction, however it is ultimately a matter of funding available. As the funding and planning process for the provision of new skate/bike park facilities may take some time to achieve, one possibility is to re-use the existing concrete pad of the Coliseum ice rink to relocate the modular skate park features from the Getaway Sk8 Board Park. This would provide a suitable location for skateboarders/bikers while future facilities are designed and constructed. The Master Plan for Victoria Park allows for the continuing use of this temporary facility while a more permanent park is constructed in the adjacent space (see Master Plan on page 14), should the funding for this become available.

Case Studies

While the provision of skateboarding, BMX biking and other action-sport facilities may be relatively new to the municipal sector, there are many successful case studies within Ontario, Canada and internationally.

Two prime examples of Canadian skate/bike parks (both designed by New Line Skateparks) are the Saugeen Shores park in Port Elgin, and the Kiwanis Skate Plaza in London.

The Saugeen Shores park is a good example of a smaller facility that has seen great success through a well structured program of events. The 12,000 sq.ft. concrete skate park opened in 2008 is located in close proximity to other recreational & shopping facilities. The Saugeen Shores Rotary Skatepark committee started their skatepark efforts in 2004 and have since stayed deeply involved in the programming of events, including supervised sessions and training camps for a variety of skill levels. However the Port Elgin park's reception amongst the skateboard community is mixed as the particular features there cater to a more advanced level of skater, and can be intimidating to new users. The compact nature of the site also limits the creativity and flow experience by skaters - both key ingredients to a successful facility.

The Kiwanis Skate Plaza in London, Ontario is one of the most well received and used parks in the area, and has become a regional draw. The park is of a progressive design in that it doesn't appear as a skatepark but rather an aesthetic blend of hardscape/street-scape features designed for use by skateboarders & BMX bikers. It has been designed to accommodate all skill levels in a safe and progression-friendly layout. This 'plaza' style design incorporating many sculptural, skate-able concrete features would be well suited to a potential skate park at Victoria Park. Not only would it meet the demands of the local skater/bikers but could (if designed accordingly) lend aesthetic qualities to the wider park landscape, and thus further enhance the overall vision on the park.



Image source: New Line Skateparks Inc.

Skate/Bike Park Examples

The integrated use of planting, public art & sculptural, skate-able installations are key components in successful Skate Park design. The image of Kiwanis Skateboard Plaza in particular, shows how a well design space can be integrated within the wider park landscape. The two images below are of the Plaza at the Forks, in Winnipeg. Aggregate-material pathways were used to exclude skaters from pedestrian-only areas, while specific spectator areas are incorporated within the layout, for safe use during events/competitions.



Image source: New Line Skateparks Inc.



Image source: New Line Skateparks Inc.



Appendices

- ¹ Coliseum Demolition memorandum
- ² Visioning Meeting notes
- ³ Visioning Meeting sign-in sheet
- ⁴ Preliminary Design Meeting notes
- ⁵ Preliminary Design Meeting sign-in sheet
- ⁶ Summary of Responses to Preliminary Design Questionnaire
- ⁷ Visioning Meeting Poster
- ⁸ Preliminary Design Meeting Poster
- ⁹ Final Meeting Poster
- ¹⁰ *Building a Skatepark: Modular or Concrete* (Landscape Architecture Magazine article from Skatepark.org).

DATE: June 3, 2011
TO: P. Coulter **DIV:** **DEPT:** Community Services
FROM: B. Bloomfield **DIV:** Clerk's **DEPT:** Corporate Services
SUBJECT: FUTURE OF COLISEUM BUILDING AT VICTORIA PARK

COMMENTS: City Council, at its meeting held on May 31, 2011 considered the above noted matter and the following resolution was adopted:

"THAT City Council hereby receives a report dated May 25, 2011, from the Director of Community Services regarding the future of the Coliseum structure, and further

THAT following the new ice pads being opened the existing Coliseum structure be demolished through a public tender process."



Briana Bloomfield,
Acting Deputy Clerk

/bb

c: G. Henry, Acting City Manager
W. Ritchie, Director of Financial Services
B. McRoberts, Director of Operations
J. Tuohy, Purchasing Manager
S. Edwards, Executive Assistant/Public Relations Co-ordinator
Clerk's Files



**MEETING NOTES
VICTORIA PARK MASTER PLAN
VISIONING MEETING
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 10, 2011 - 4:00 P.M.
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

1.0 CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME – 4:13 P.M.

Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced Benj Albrecht, of Benj Art Inc. Landscape Architects who the City hired to undertake the Master Plan.

2.0 PRESENTATION – Benj Albrecht, Benj Art Inc. Landscape Architects

2.1 HISTORY

Benj Albrecht described the Victoria Park triangular piece of land situated above and below the escarpment slope and highlighted the urban fabric. He highlighted the history of Victoria Park, its past and current uses. The “pleasure grounds” were a gift from the Federal government to the City in 1842. The park has a local black history connection . John Daddy Hall cleared the lands, had a small home on the site and had squatter’s rights until 1900. The consultant asked the public to forward any other historical information which may be of interest.

Some of the past and current uses include: Fall Fair, horse racing, daredevil displays, ballooning, baseball, parades, snowmobile races, rodeo.

The question is how will the park be used in the future and how does the new regional recreation centre change the function of the park.

2.1 INITIAL ANALYSIS

Existing features were highlighted: natural escarpment; proximity to downtown core, culture and business centre; close to local schools and churches. The sports facilities include the Coliseum, sportsfields, 400 m track, and St. George’s Park including ball diamond, tennis and volleyball court. There is also an opportunity for visual connection both within the park and views looking out of the park.

The consultant described the “Bands of Influence” that relate to the park and was felt should be incorporated into the conceptual design:

- Cultural
- Historical
- Visual
- Residential
- Agricultural
- Natural, escarpment

There are a number of key issues to be considered during the design and master plan process. These include:

- Entrance Presence
- Pedestrian Routes
- Visual connections – viewpoints from Cityscape; incorporate varying elevations to maximize view of City and harbour
- Trail Linkages – physical connection to existing trails (bike, Tom Thomson Trail, Freedom Trail) gateway to the downtown, Recreation Centre
- Integration of environmental features – passive and outdoor recreation spaces; natural attributes; agricultural landscape eg. crop plantings
- Suitability – existing grandstand; barns; existing amenities, fields
- Skate & Bike Park suitability
- Strathcona school site proximity (potential apartment development)
- Potential Sculpture Park
- Interpretive signage
- Coliseum – is the building being demolished or are there other proposed uses

3.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & PROCESS

Benj Albrecht reviewed the process to develop the Victoria Park Master Plan and outlined the opportunities the public has in providing input into the process.

Phase 1 – Visioning Meeting: Obtain public and key stakeholders wants and needs for the park and determine what should be incorporated into conceptual design including function of Coliseum, additional programming.

Phase 2 – Site Review: Look at opportunities and constraints of the site, possibly relocating components; Conceptual design will be presented at a 2nd public meeting scheduled for April 7th, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers

Phase 3 – Final Park Plan: The Master Plan will be presented at the public meeting during the June 9th Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee meeting at 7:00 p.m.

4.0 VISIONING AND PUBLIC INPUT

A questionnaire was distributed and groups and individuals were asked to complete the form and submit it at the end of the meeting or forward to Pam Coulter, Community Services at City Hall.

The public was asked to share their experiences at Victoria Park:

4.1 FAVOURITE PLACES

Alex Van Wieringen, Vice Principal - St. Mary's High School uses the park for sporting events, track & field; physical education (approx. 8 classes/day); football; rugby; and soccer. They use it consistently from September to November and then April until end of June. St. Mary's High School does not have any green space.

Councillor Arlene Wright advised that there were old agreements with the School Boards for school use of the fields; Pam Coulter advised that there is a newer agreement with St. Mary's High School and that the City is currently reviewing agreements for use.

Fall Fair – The consultant indicated that his mandate is to only look at suitability of uses; the fair is a huge part of the park and there is an existing agreement between the Agricultural Society and the City. The plan will look at ways to improve the function of the fair.

Councillor Colleen Purdon used to live at the bottom of St. Mary's Hill. In the winter the park oval was flooded for children to skate on. She noted that there is no large green space on the east side of the City for field activities. Everybody in the area went to Victoria Park.

4.2 DAY TO DAY USES

Past uses have Included: sports tournaments, special events (snowmobile races, fall fair, rodeo), church revival; Canadian Cancer Society's Relay of Life; medieval event including jousting.

Minor soccer would like to continue to use the fields.

4.3 FACILITIES THAT SHOULD BE RETAINED

- Agriculture uses for the Owen Sound Fall Fair
- Large space that is multi-functional

4.4 ISSUES/PROBLEMS

Groups indicated some of the barriers encountered to using the park.

- Brenda Dailey Facilities Booking Coordinator suggested some of the uses are not symbiotic (eg. RCMP Musical ride and minor soccer as the horses damage the playing field)
- St. Mary's High School after the fall fair and snowmobile event feel the field is not left in an appropriate condition.
- Mayor Haswell - Pedestrian and bicycle access; suggest winding access from St. George's Park to Regional Recreation Centre.
- Safe pedestrian crossing on 10th St. East and controlled access to park
- Phil Bye – Owen Sound Agricultural Society – more green space but also provide additional parking. Last year the Society entered into an agreement with MTO to provide additional parking. The Society's storage barn and grandstand are also old and may need to be replaced and may be part of discussions with the City on renewal of their lease agreement; the Agricultural Society want to be part of process to determine how important agricultural link and component is to the community. There may also be opportunity for shared uses to maximize use of the facility.

Many in attendance supported the importance of the Fall Fair and the community's agricultural heritage. The Director of Community Services advised that Council gave clear indication during the Regional Recreation Centre discussions that the Agricultural Society Fall Fair was an integral part of Victoria Park.

The grandstand has deteriorated and it may be prudent to investigate portable stands and incorporate informal seating for daily use and a grant with other non-profit groups toward the purchase of portable bleachers.

Richard MacDonald, member of several City Committees indicated that it is worthwhile establishing guiding principles. All parks don't have to be the same, and perhaps Victoria Park should be more of a sports park instead of a leisure park.

Jim Aitken, Bruce Grey Separate District School Board wondered what is the City's vision of the park. Will it be a sporting park and allow snowmobile races, demolition derbies to continue or does the City have other ideas?

In response, it was noted that this master plan process will determine the vision, function and how the uses will be incorporated into the park.

There was a question regarding usable space within the park and the future of the MTO property outside of the park.

Richard Slater, Ontario Realty Corporation (for the MTO site) who was in attendance stated that the property is under used and they are always looking at ways to maximize value, however there are no current plans for the MTO site at this point.

5.0 NEW FACILITIES & EVENTS

Sally Kidson, Bluewater District School Board suggested that since the fields are multi-use, alternative artificial materials might be better suited for the fields with users sharing in the cost to minimize the burden on the City. She also suggested incorporating special needs design with accessible features and tactile experiences.

Benj indicated there may be an opportunity to integrate form and sculpture into the park to which many in attendance agreed.

Better use of the slopes within the City was suggested; Harrison Park had at one time a rope tow at the toboggan hill (removed due to liability); could be used for snowboarding; winding trail through trees for bikes.

5.1 COLISEUM

Owen Sound is essentially the hub of Grey/Bruce; this facility is a way to position Owen Sound as a destination. There was a lot of discussion on the fate of the Coliseum and whether the building could be used without ice for multiple sporting events and dry land training.

Councillor McManaman confirmed that at this point Council plans for the Coliseum to be demolished when the recreation centre is completed. However, if a business case was brought forward not to demolish that building for another use that would not cost the City any money to operate, Council would consider it. The Coliseum is planned to be in use until spring, 2012.

Many of the groups represented (Minor Lacrosse, Minor Soccer, Indoor Soccer) felt that there is a demand for an indoor facility such as the Coliseum; as volunteer organizations they do not have the capacity or expertise to operate that size of facility.

City staff indicated that as part of the annual review of the ice allocation policy in the spring, there will be new opportunities as we look forward to three surfaces. The City will work with minor sports groups to maximize opportunities to meet the demand of these and other users.

It was confirmed that the consultant's mandate is to look at the function of the park and prepare a conceptual plan taking into consideration opportunities with/without the Coliseum. This process will assist Council to make an informed decision as to the future of the park. One of the constraints with keeping the Coliseum will be the excessive space required for parking, if both facilities were to remain in use.

The skateboarders suggested using the concrete floor of the Coliseum after demolition for skateboarding. There may be other opportunities to utilize some of the large beams for sculpture/architectural uses or picnic shelter within the park.

In response to a question, Councillor McManaman confirmed that to date the structural reports on the Coliseum indicate there are no short term problems although the ice plant is deteriorating. The report also addresses the soil.

5.2 SKATEBOARD PARK

There was a large contingent of skateboard and bike park users. Darryl Nash, Vertical distributed copies of a powerpoint presentation depicting designs of modern concrete skate/bike parks and incorporating landscape features. Safe transportation and access to the park is essential.

It was suggested the Kiwanis Skateboard Park in London was an ideal example of a current skate park.

An individual within the community has offered to help prepare a grant application. The City has also been approached by and is working with a local service club in the development of a new skateboard/bike park on a cost-sharing basis.

A Victoria Park location would provide more safety and less vandalism to a skateboard park because of its visibility and others using the site.

It was noted that the City's Recreation, Parks and Facilities Master Plan prepared in 2007 looked at demographics, needs assessment and existing facilities and provided direction to the City for future development.

6.0 CLOSING REMARKS

Benj Albrecht thanked everyone for coming and asked that the questionnaires be completed and either left or dropped off at City Hall. The questionnaire will provide valuable insight for potential uses for the park.

The questionnaire and additional information will be available on the City's website. Future meeting dates are April 7 and June 9.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Victoria Park Master Plan

VISIONING MEETING . Registration

February 10, 2011. 4:00 - 6:00pm . Owen Sound Council Chambers



Name and Organization	Address	Phone No.	Email
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Traci Cleverley Pink	Owen Sound	519 270 5641	thepinkpath@gmail.com
Bill MacDonald OSML	Annan	519 372 1977	bmac@huron.tel.on.ca
Barry Knuiesselbank	ALLIANCE FORA ²⁴² No 4-1A0	519 372-5272	barry@BarryStowArchitects.ca
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Mike McArthur	O.S.M.S.A. FUTSAL	226-664-0208	mmearthur@hotmail.com
Sally Kidson	Bluewater DSB	519-363-2014	sally-kidson@bwdsb.on.ca
Doreen Rogers	Bruceway Catholic DSB	519-364-5820	doreen-rogers@bgcdsb.org
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Aaron MacDonald	13 Princess St Shallowford	519 375 3525	AaronMacDonald@5678daion.com
Tyler Cunningham	220 St John's Crescent Shallowford	519-935-2210	TylerCunningham68@hotmail.com



**VICTORIA PARK MASTER PLAN
OPEN HOUSE/PUBLIC MEETING
September 22, 2011
4:00 p.m. City Hall, Council Chambers**

- PRESENT:** Mayor Deborah Haswell
Councillor Jim McManaman
Councillor Ian Boddy
Councillor Jan Chamberlain
Councillor Colleen Purdon
Councillor Bill Twaddle
Paul Caron
Paul Foster
Bob Garnett
Richard MacDonald
Sharon McKeachnie
Mark Rouse
Kim Williams
Deborah Young (Councillor – Meaford)
- ABSENT/REGRETS:** Tom Wiley (Councillor – Georgian Bluffs)
Ryan Thompson (Councillor – Georgian Bluffs)
- STAFF PRESENT:** Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services
John Howard, Manager of Parks and Open Space
Pat Bryant, Administrative Assistant, Community Services
- GUESTS:** Benj Albrecht, Benj Art Inc. Landscape Architects
Luke Williams, Benj Art Inc. Landscape Architects

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME – 5:00 p.m.

Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reviewed the process to date. The visioning session held in February resulted in feedback which was used in developing the preliminary conceptual design presented this evening.

The draft plan and comments sheet will be posted on the City's website following the meeting. Comments were requested to be submitted by October 6, 2011.

Mayor Haswell welcomed the public and Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee and noted that a lot of different sectors were represented. She

thought the plan had a number of features that will generate interest and discussion.

2. PRESENTATION BY CONSULTANT

Pam Coulter introduced and turned the meeting over to Benj Albrecht, Benj Art Inc. Landscape Architect.

In addition to the visioning session, meetings were held with stakeholders, staff and the community. Common elements from these meetings were summarized and incorporated into the plan presented. The following is a summary of some of those comments:

- Provide better facilities for existing and new uses;
- Examine suitability of existing facilities;
- Relocate/replace grandstand;
- Storage facilities for local teams/groups for outdoor fields;
- Interpretive wayfinding and signage;
- Picnic shelter'
- Passive to active uses'
- Continue agricultural fair usage;
- Additional parking; possibly green parking (non-asphalt parking);
- Reuse some of building materials from Coliseum;
- Improve trail and linkages to local network.

The comments were taken into consideration during research of options and elements. The design looked at proximity of site to natural escarpment, downtown core, schools and Georgian Bay and the opportunity to provide a variety of uses and levels of activity.

3. SUMMARY OF DESIGN CONCEPTS

The original concept looked at 6 bands of influence: Cultural; Natural, Recreational; Historical, Agricultural and Visual which are incorporated into the preliminary design specifics.

- i) Recreation:
 - outdoor extension of Recreation Centre suitable for other active uses;
 - relocation of skateboard park- propose a 12,500 sq. ft. space;
 - relocation of ball diamond from St. George's Park to upper level; St. George's Park becomes more passive area
- ii) Agriculture use:
 - establish central promenade to access different events: fall fair, midway;
 - retained space suitable for tractor pull area
 - construct new smaller grandstand to be supplemented by portable bleachers
- iii) Historical:
 - retain features and include interpretive signage;
 - retain section of horse track and define with relevant sculpture

- iv) Culture:
 - incorporate sculptures and interpretive signage; reuse select components of the Coliseum as sculptural spine through the park including key entrance features.

- v) Nature:
 - naturalized planting areas including natural berm for seating;
 - remove unhealthy trees in woodland area to maintain views;
 - passive zones in St. Georges park for smaller children; naturalized plantings; include natural berm for seating on street side of park; back size creep escarpment and fill in berm; concern about noise from the street.

4. QUESTION PERIOD

Phil Bye, Owen Sound Agricultural Society

Mr. Bye complimented the consultant on this first draft of the conceptual plan and expressed interest in having further discussion on the design elements.

Upon a question, Councillor McManaman confirmed that a tender will be issued to demolish the Coliseum building after the new centre is operational.

It was also confirmed that there will not be any additional access to the park from 10th Street East other than the new 7th Avenue entrance. The Society is reluctant to invest funds with respect to servicing without knowing more details from the City for the park. Their lease agreement expires in 2015.

Pam Coulter indicated that it is important for staff, City Council and the consultant that the plan reflect the Agricultural Society's requirements into the future. In terms of the lease renewal, that is a separate matter to be discussed at a later date.

The presentation of the final master plan will be held on October 20th.

Al Nightingale – Owen Sound Family Y

Upon question, Pam Coulter confirmed that there will be 235 parking spaces plus approx 70 spaces to be provided at a later date. With respect to green space parking; the plan meets site plan requirements. The Agricultural Society has an agreement with MTO for off-site parking and the City certainly can continue to talk to MTO for additional parking during special events.

Mr. Bye confirmed the Society has a 5 year agreement with Ontario Realty Corp and would work with the City in utilizing the property for additional parking requirements.

Councillor Chamberlain suggested tiered parking to provide additional spaces as an option for the long term.

Gayle Graham, Owen Sound Family Y

With respect to the running track, it was questioned whether it will continue to be used for summer soccer for younger children. Councillor Jim McManaman advised that there is ongoing discussion with Owen Sound Minor Soccer and, in the longer term, Minor Soccer would prefer to have a soccer field.

Councillor Purdon

It was hoped that the park and recreation centre could be accessed by bicycle without traveling up 10th Street East hill.

Pam Coulter advised that the City's Engineering Division has acquired land for road widening on the north side of 10th Street East. The design includes a wide 2 way bike lane and pedestrian sidewalk to the recreation centre. It was suggested this design be included as a schedule to illustrate the pathways.

Councillor Jim McManaman

Upon a question regarding an interim location for the skateboard park, the consultant indicated he envisioned a permanent molded concrete skate park as suggested by the skate park users.

Councillor McManaman expressed concern regarding the location of the ball diamond and whether there may be a more suitable location elsewhere in the City.

With respect to costing, the consultant will provide phasing and associated costs at the final meeting in October.

Staff indicated that St. George's is not used by men's teams because of the nearby church. The preliminary design may be trying to accommodate too many uses. It may be desirable to include a permanent site for the skateboard park and relocate the ball diamond else.

Richard MacDonald

Upon a question regarding use of a smaller grandstand, the consultant indicated that the grandstand is used for the fall fair as well as for sports activities and special events. However, it is used approximately 10% of the time. A smaller grandstand would less impede the site and provide space for portable bleachers each accommodating approximately 300 people.

With respect to winter use and snow storage, the consultant hoped the City would keep some of the pedestrian paths open for winter use.

Fred Furness

Mr. Furness wondered about multi-use paved recreational trail for cycling, roller blading, safe accessible walking paths for seniors and maybe winter skiing. He thought that access to St. George's Park from 11th Street makes sense.

The consultant indicated that the escarpment has a big impact to providing accessible trails and biking paths.

5. CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor McManaman thanked everyone for their input. The preliminary plan will be placed on the City's website and he encouraged the public to submit their comments.

The preliminary of the final plan will be held on Thursday, October 20th.
Details will be posted on the City's website.

6. ADJOURNMENT - 5:55 p.m.



**VICTORIA PARK MASTER PLAN
PRELIMINARY DESIGN PUBLIC MEETING / OPEN HOUSE**
September 22, 2011 Owen Sound Council Chambers

Name & Organization	Address	Phone No.	Email
Doreen / Nash (vertical)	910 2nd Ave E	519 372-0092	doreen@bmts.com
Sharon McEachern (O.S. Park & Rec)	1600 2nd Ave. E	519-376-6250	sharon@bmts.com
DEBORAH YOUNG (✓ + MEAFORS)		519. 373. 8301	dyoung@meaford.ca
Catherine Purcell Meagher	2 Trounbridge St W	519 538-1068	cpurcell@meaford.ca
Jean Chamberlain	249 4th St A E	519 371-4746	jane47@gmail.com
Phil Bye CAG Society	59911 Conz R/R Annan	519 372 1039	byeusta@bmts.com
(Pro) Jim Wilkins (AGS)	R# 4 OS	519. 376 - 5335	jim.wilkins.consult@bmts.com
Doreen Schultz - Brown Group/OSB	799 16th Ave Hawer N4N 3A1	519-364-5830	doreen-shultz@bycslsb.org
Graciela Kelly Pink Ops	107 2nd St W OS N4K2E6	519 312 9279	thepinkpath@gmail.com
Law Gillen	YMCA		
Brian Breukelman	832 4th Ave. E. OS	519-372-2211	brianb@breukelmanesign.com
Gayle Gethlein	631 4th St A E OS	519-376-0484	gggethlein@ymcaowensound.on.ca
Alex van Wieringer	445 9th Street E.	519 371 9399	alex.vanwieringer@bycslsb.org
Harry Hoff	747-27th St W. O.S.	519 372-1084	hhuff1084@progers.com
Tom RICE	RR2 Owen Sound	519 371 3424	trrice@rogers.com
Ruth Barwell	R.R.#5 Owen Sound	519 371-5045	ruth@osicom.net
Styn + Fred Furness	RR46 OS	519 376-9423	fjf@bmts.com
Amanda Sylvest OS Ag Society	660 2nd St E OS N4K	519 372-2656	amanda.s@bell.net
Cathy Cotton ByCDSched Bd	Hawer	519 364 5820 x230	cathy.cotton@bycslsb.org
Al Nichtingale	480 4th Ave E	519 379-2576	al.nichtingale@owensound.on.ca
Denise Reid	126 Kingston Beach RR#2	371-1386	denise.reid@hughes.net

Public & Stakeholder Comments on Preliminary Design

The following list summarizes the public & stakeholder comments/responses to the Preliminary Master Plan presented at the September 22nd Open House / Public Meeting. These comments were collected from those in attendance at the meeting and comments submitted to the City of Owen Sound in weeks leading up to October 7th, as well as meetings the consultant conducted with various stakeholders.

- *The ball diamond may no longer be required at this site. Should it be removed suitability elsewhere and city wide requirements should be examined.*
- *Concern raised regarding removal of trees from slope.*
- *Consider switchback type path on slope.*
- *Skatepark requested closer to the street, or at St. Georges Park location.*
- *Consider making access to playground suitable for mobility impaired children.*
- *Bicycle friendly route required to navigate the escarpment.*
- *Positive feedback on Green Parking solution for overflow/event parking issues, and to solve current issues with parking near the sports field.*
- *Suggested access via MTO property not practical.*
- *Request made for Roller Derby facilities.*
- *Concern was raised regarding number of parking spaces, especially with proposed ball diamond and required parking for it's use.*
- *Utilize Coliseum's concrete pad for Skatepark, Basketball and Roller Hockey.*
- *Create a path around the perimeter of the site for walking, roller blading, cross-country skiing, and skating.*
- *Concern raised regarding removal of tennis courts & volley ball court.*
- *While most feedback regarding the proposed Skate/Bike Park was positive, concern was raised regarding the shape of Skatepark as being too narrow, and possibly limiting to the it's future design.*
- *Water feature requested.*
- *Combination of permanent and portable seating required to accommodate 2500 people.*
- *Access to the infield track needs to be retained for Fall Fair.*
- *Access to back storage building.*
- *Fence along escarpment improved.*
- *Provide Lawn Bowling facilities.*

INVITATION to a VISIONING MEETING

The City of Owen Sound & Benj Art Inc.
invite you to participate in a Public Meeting
to share ideas for a renewed

VICTORIA PARK MASTER PLAN

FEBRUARY 10, 2011
4:00 - 6:00 pm

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
808 2nd Avenue East, Owen Sound

The plan will establish a renewed vision for the park. Owen Sound residents, as well as local clubs, organizations and individuals who use the park are invited to attend. To ensure the Master Plan truly reflects the community's needs, ***we need to hear from the public!*** By attending, you will have the opportunity to discuss ideas, ask questions, and help create the best possible plan. City Staff, and Benj Albrecht, the Project Landscape Architect, will be in attendance at the meeting.



If unable to attend meeting, written comments are welcome. Please contact the city.

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INVITATION

to an

OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC MEETING

The City of Owen Sound & Benj Art Inc.
invite you to participate in an Open House / Public Meeting
to view and discuss the preliminary design for the

VICTORIA PARK MASTER PLAN

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

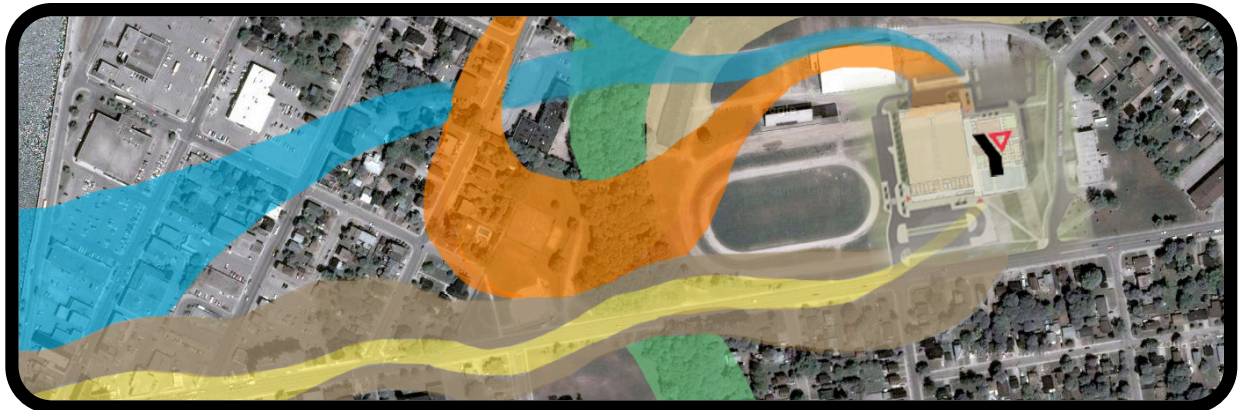
4.00 - 5.00pm: Open House

5.00 - 6.00pm: Presentation & Discussion

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

808 2nd Avenue East, Owen Sound

There will be a preliminary design presented by Benj Albrecht, the Project Landscape Architect. This will be followed by a discussion about the project and an opportunity to have any questions answered by City Staff and Benj Art Inc.



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INVITATION

to an

OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC MEETING

The City of Owen Sound & Benj Art Inc.
invite you to participate in an Open House / Public Meeting
to view and discuss the

VICTORIA PARK MASTER PLAN

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2011

4.30 - 5.00pm: Open House

5.00 - 6.00pm: Presentation & Discussion

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

808 2nd Avenue East, Owen Sound

The revised design will be presented by Benj Albrecht, the Project Landscape Architect.
This will be followed by a discussion about the project and an opportunity to have any
questions answered by City Staff and Benj Art Inc.



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Article extracted from www.skatepark.org

Building a Skatepark: Modular or Concrete

By Carol Newman, Landscape Architecture Magazine

Growth in the sport of skateboarding has come in waves: waves of interest among youth, waves of protest over urban street skaters, wooden waves on community facilities, and surging waves of concrete forms on the landscape. The current wave of skateboard passion spreading across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia shows no sign of ebbing. Statistics from a Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association survey indicate that the numbers of skateboarders are growing dramatically—since 1998 participation is up by 81 percent—while interest in team sports is tapering.

As skateboarding moves up in the ranks of sports and recreation, a broad shift in the attitude of communities toward skaters and their parks is evolving. Skateboarding as a legitimate sport is here to stay, but skateparks are still a relative rarity. However, municipal governments everywhere are responding to the demand for skateparks with a wave of their own by building skateparks as fast as possible. When faced with this demand, how should a community decide between prefab modular units and permanent concrete facilities? This choice has practical, economic, and aesthetic ramifications, but most important, it affects the long-term satisfaction of the participants themselves.

One of the tastiest carrots the prefab industry has to entice city officials is cost. For any given square footage, a prefab park is likely to have a lower price tag than concrete. In many cases, the difference in price quotes can be dramatic. According to the Skatepark Association of the U.S.A., a rough cost estimate for a 10,000 square-foot facility can vary from \$25,000 for a portable or wood ramp park to \$200,000 for an in-ground concrete park, and the cost per square foot can range from \$10 to \$20 or more. Costs for steel-frame modular parks usually fall somewhere in between, with a 10,000-square-foot park starting at around \$30,000.

Fabulous Prefab

In an imaginary world in which money is no object, every town might have its own world-class concrete skatepark, but the real world forces us to make choices, and modular parks have several important benefits. Prefab units

affordably calm the jitters and soothe the worries of community leaders who fear that a skatepark may create more problems than it solves. In areas where skateparks are a rarity, community leaders may worry about potential risks, vandalism, and—maybe most important—failure. What if, after an initial flurry of interest, an expensive park lays fallow?

In addition, young or inexperienced skaters are often more comfortable learning basic skills on modular equipment. For kids making a transition from driveway skateboarding, a modular park can provide a more manageable and less-intimidating environment. Some towns have planned parks with both concrete and modular elements to accommodate different skill levels, and many communities undergo a natural progression from successful modular parks to permanent concrete facilities.

P. J. Perry, development coordinator for the suburban Albuquerque community of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, says that when Rio Rancho first raised the possibility of building a skatepark, “there was a lot of resentment for the sport.” Starting with a modular park allowed the community to test the waters, “to get an introduction to the skatepark environment without making a huge financial commitment.” If the park didn’t spark enough interest, it could be converted to a basketball court—a selling point for the naysayers. However, Rio Rancho never had to recycle that concrete: The three prefab parks are by far the most used parks in Rio Rancho. Perry says, “Modular was the catalyst they needed to move on to grander plans.” The groundbreaking for a major in-ground concrete park is set for mid-2004.

For Hailey, Idaho, a prefab park gave local kids a place to skate temporarily while plans for a permanent park were in the works. Community visionaries also recognized that a temporary park would drum up community interest in the project and help to raise precious funds for a concrete park. After building a small, temporary park on borrowed land, the city government and local businesses saw immediately how good it was for the community. There was a nearly universal understanding that giving kids a permanent skatepark was an investment in Hailey’s youth that would benefit the whole community. This understanding made the job of fund-raising far easier. Now Hailey’s 6,000 residents have bragging rights to one of the best skateparks in the West.

Elite Concrete

Skatepark cost analysis can benefit from a broader view. Rod Wojtanik, landscape architect and project manager for Portland Parks and Recreation, has years of experience planning for Portland’s skateparks and has determined that poor long-range durability drives up prefab costs.

“In a nutshell,” he says, “ramps are cheaper to install but in the long run they are considerably more expensive. Ramps made of steel are noisier, get chipped and rust. Ramps made of wood and masonite need to be checked regularly for screw heads that back out. They don’t hold up well under inclement weather and they don’t take the abuse of the sport very well. These factors increase maintenance costs and in a few years the ramps need replacing. There is no cost savings with ramps if you look at five- to ten-year feasibility of construction, maintenance, and replacement costs.”

Several companies offer warranties covering manufacturing defects for up to 15 years; however, warranties do not cover the normal wear and tear caused by hundreds of users daily and, therefore, won’t solve the durability problem for towns trying to find savings in prefab.

By contrast, a well-built concrete park can last for decades. One vintage park that has weathered the years and still gives skaters a ride is Derby Park near Santa Cruz, California. Built by local surfers over 30 years ago, this venerable park is considered the hallowed ground of early skateboarding in the United States and remains unchanged from its original design. Another, Stockwell Stakepark in the Brixton neighborhood of South London, was built in 1978 and still draws large crowds of skaters. Known to locals as Brixton Beach, its concrete curves have formed a culturally important part of the urban landscape for over 25 years. The park is located at the intersection of two busy roads, and spectators can find skaters maneuvering its enduring curves at all hours.

Aside from regular maintenance such as mowing, arbor care, trash and debris cleanup, well-built concrete parks have proven to be nearly maintenance free. According to Tom Miller of Skaters for Portland Skateparks, “If you want the cheapest skatepark in the sense that you’ll get the longest use out of the design, you have to build with concrete.”

While the short-term investment in prefab can be less expensive than concrete, the savings may not be as dramatic when all park costs are considered. Some of the largest costs are the same for both venues: the costs of land, site preparation, amenities, landscaping, and signage. A modular park often requires installation of a concrete pad, and there are shipping and installation costs for the units, all of which narrow the gap between concrete and prefab.

Users as Designers

Trial and error have dictated design and material decisions in the rush to meet the demand for skateparks, often with disappointing results. While there are

still no true industry standards, there is a great deal of experience to draw from when choosing between movable modular units and permanent concrete forms.

Often communities seek to build what their skaters want, looking for input from the local skaters to inform their decisions. While that seems to be a logical and thoughtful approach, ironically, it may not best serve the interests of those very same local skaters in the long run, regardless of whether concrete or modular is used.

A member of the Hawaii Skatepark Association, Eric Davis of Honolulu has seen his community make well-intentioned mistakes over and over. Although enlisting local kids in planning and design development is a sacred cow in the industry, “letting kids steer the direction a design takes is a mistake,” says Davis. Kids know they want a skatepark, but they are still developing and have only limited experience to draw on. “If our world ran like that, we would have basketball hoops that were four feet high, and everyone could slam-dunk.”

City planners can’t imagine how fast young skaters will master new challenges. “A prefab park gets boring really quickly because the kids outgrow it in a matter of months,” Davis says. “When they outgrow it, it’s no longer a challenge, and they get frustrated and go back to the street. A town that’s trying to solve the problem of having nowhere to skate is actually pushing the kids right back where they don’t want them to be.”

Davis’s work with the Hawaii Skatepark Association, which advocates for quality skateparks, has paid off, and skaters on the island of Oahu will soon have a well-built, in-ground facility that generations of local skaters will enjoy.

Design and Safety

In addition to driving up costs, deterioration of modular units creates safety problems: sharp edges, loose screws, and widening lips and joints. In a pitch for a quality concrete park to his city hall in Arlington, Washington, Chris Raezer of Skateboard Alliance, an advocacy group for quality skateparks, referred city officials to two local modular parks, Bothell and Mount Vernon. Both parks were less than three years old and had already suffered significant wear and tear. His presentation included photographs of loose screws with kneepad plastic wedged underneath. And, he noted, not everyone wears kneepads.

According to experienced skateboarders, the durable, smooth surface and permanent structure of a concrete park is inherently safer than a deteriorating modular unit. The case Raezer made eventually overturned the original plan

Arlington had for a modular park in favor of a smaller, but higher-quality, concrete facility built by Grindline, one of the most respected skatepark firms in the country.

To the uninitiated though, concrete, with its deep bowls and electrifying transitions, can appear more intimidating than modular units, and parents and city officials may assume as a result that they are more dangerous. Lifelong skater Eric Davis knows from years of experience that exactly the opposite can be true: “The smaller the challenges in a park the less seriously you take them, and the more apt you are to get hurt.” A serious park commands a skater’s serious attention and as a result can be a safer park.

Size Matters

Regardless of the long-term benefits of concrete, budget considerations are a reality for all municipal governments, and some decisions must be made with compromises and trade-offs. Size is an important negotiating point (most experts suggest that parks should be a minimum of 10,000 to 15,000 square feet): Many communities with a skatepark believe their biggest mistake was in not building it larger.

However, minimum size guidelines can be misleading. A community that abandons a concrete design and opts for prefab because the minimum size is unaffordable may be missing an opportunity and may be skirting the issue of finding the best long-term investment. While size matters, it is far from being the most important consideration that a planner faces. For example, the 2,500-square-foot park built by Dreamland Skateparks in tiny Donald, Oregon, is so elegant that it attracts visitors from around the world and has produced three sponsored professional skaters from a total population of 750.

An alternative may be to consider a long-range master plan that builds a park in phases, assuring the enduring quality of each phase. Volunteers and parent activists in Hood River, Oregon had big dreams and a small budget and, with the help of Dreamland Skateparks, answered their dilemma with a park planned in four phases. When completed, Hood River Skatepark will cost an estimated \$401,000. Planning in smaller increments put the project within reach. The four-phase plan (the first two phases have been completed) is for a world-class facility that caters not only to skaters but also serves as a community recreation center for families with a full range of playground facilities and amenities.

Hood River recognized the value of locating a skatepark in a highly visible area and serving a broader segment of the population rather than relegating skateboarders to a back corner out of sight. Well-designed concrete skatepark

structures can be sculptural beauties and can enhance cityscapes or park landscapes. The sculptural elements of concrete skateparks can be incorporated into a community's master plan and can create a focal point for recreation areas, city centers, and town squares. Hood River used existing landscape elements in its skatepark plan, weaving the park around important arbor specimens. Such design can take advantage of the spectator appeal of the sport, drawing nonskaters and skaters and essentially creating outdoor community centers.

Blunders and Bulldozers

Despite the fact that communities across the country are devoting resources as never before to building skateparks, there is still a widespread sense among lifelong skateboarders that the "blind are leading the blind." Standards have yet to be established for design, materials, and site requirements. While it may be true that well-designed and expertly constructed concrete parks are relatively inexpensive to maintain, a wide range of building errors in materials, construction, and design can result in a concrete mess that has no advantage over a modular park even if initial costs were equal.

For skateboarders in North Portland, Oregon, disappointment came in the form of a poorly designed, improperly constructed, and roughly finished concrete skatepark built by the Oregon Army National Guard under their Innovative Readiness Training Program. Despite the town's good intentions, Skaters for Portland Skateparks now must raise the funds necessary to complete planned renovations to the park.

The experience in Indianapolis was even more dramatic. A 15,000-square-foot park built in November 2000 at a cost of \$470,000, Major Taylor Indy Parks Skatepark had to close for major repairs only three years later due to the intense wear and tear caused by BMX bike pegs. Those repairs cost \$74,000 and have still not solved the problems caused by the bikes. The damage could have been prevented, according to park officials, if the construction specifications had been planned with BMX use in mind.

For tight municipal budgets, mistakes can be serious and costly. Simply choosing to build with concrete does not guarantee a good outcome. Mistakes made in concrete are very expensive—bulldozers and do-overs don't come cheap.

What it comes down to is that a successful park, one that satisfies users for decades and is worthy of the resources invested in it, becomes a classic by virtue of design excellence. The timeless standard

bearer for skateboarders everywhere is Burnside Skatepark, which was built in 1990 by skateboarders/designers/builders in the wasteland beneath the Burnside Bridge in Portland, Oregon. Tony Hawk star of the skateboard world, has anointed Burnside as his favorite park anywhere and has used it for the backdrop of his immensely popular video games, the Proskater series. What makes Burnside great, according to skaters, is its endless lines (the paths skaters take through its terrain) and endless challenges. Expert skaters come back again and again to test their mettle.

Learning Curves

Proponents of prefab argue that even the best concrete design has a finite shelf life because the park is locked into a permanent configuration bound to become ho-hum to skateboarders eventually. They say that modular units can be endlessly rearranged to produce a variety of skating experiences. This point can be appealing to nervous city hall officials trying to hedge against wasting tight resources.

Many skateboarders insist that prefab just doesn't compare to the experience of skating a good concrete park. Eric Davis compares prefab to Putt-Putt golf—and a well-designed and constructed concrete park to a world-class golf course designed by Jack Nicholas. Davis says, "You can't play golf on a Putt-Putt course."

"Ramp parks do not offer skaters the ability to grow and develop their skills past a certain level of competency," Wojtanik says, "so they quickly lose interest." He and other concrete advocates insist that a superb design produces an infinite range of challenges for novice and professional skaters. Kent Dahlgren of Dreamland Skateparks believes that the very nature of a modular unit limits it. He notes that a skater's experience in traversing a 45-degree ramp, for example, is identical whether the contact is made at point A, or two feet removed from that point. No matter where the ramp is positioned or how many different ways it is approached, the experience, according to Dahlgren, is the same every time. An obstacle designed into a curving concrete structure, on the other hand, creates a different experience with even subtle differences in approach.

Challenges can be built into a concrete structure in a logical progression (what Dahlgren calls a "concrete curriculum") and can stimulate development of expertise. Conquering each successive challenge prompts a skater to move on to the next one. The objective, according to Dahlgren, is to create a design that produces great skateboarders. Skaters can gain proficiency through a design that entices them to meet a goal, and then another more challenging one.

According to some skateboarders, moving modular units around to improve a park's design defeats any potential skill progression and frustrates younger skaters because it removes an important landmark. There is an important social element to mastering a skateable surface. Dahlgren says, "Skaters talk and strategize about conquering obstacles in a park. Moving the obstacles in a prefab park removes this context and broadens the gap between the high-proficiency skaters and others." The social context of skating is part of what makes a skatepark such an asset to a local community of any size—it connects people across age groups, ethnic groups, and neighborhoods.

To the advocates of this sport, nothing is more frustrating than to see a small town spend good money on a disappointing park. Chris Gilligan of Harrison, Tennessee, a Chattanooga suburb, is a skateboarder who now skates with his own kids. He knows firsthand the disappointment of an inadequate facility and describes his local park as a "textbook case of the pitfalls of modular prefab." According to Gilligan, who is advocating for a concrete park in his town, "A ramp park is a quick, cheap, temporary—but ultimately ineffective—fix. A professionally designed and finished concrete park is a long-term addition to the quality of life for a community and an investment in healthy recreation and fitness for youth and adults alike."

Once the choice of park format is made, there is a need for teamwork between both skatepark experts and landscape professionals. Choosing concrete may be an important first step but, by itself, is no guarantee of success. Whereas other types of municipal parks (tennis courts, basketball courts, and swimming pools, for example) have been designed and built for a hundred years or more, skateparks are a relatively new addition to local landscapes and require an insider's expertise in order to succeed. This is important not only for design but also for construction. An insider's expertise, says Skaters for Portland [Skatepark's] Miller, means far more than simply knowing how to skate. The marriage of great design talent, skateboarding talent, and construction talent is a rare blend.

In-ground designs are more than just lumpy swimming pools. Knowing exactly how a skatepark will be skated—what's possible, what's impossible, what's boring, as well as how multiple users will navigate the terrain and what a natural learning curve for a younger skater would be—cannot be anticipated by the nonskater. Just as important, a good design can be ruined by unenlightened construction but greatly benefits from an insider's knowledge. Surface finishing details, concrete components, coping details, for example, all need the touch of a hands-on builder who knows how his board will feel on the finished product.

Prefab companies should also be carefully evaluated. Simply choosing a company that has done lots of business doesn't guarantee satisfaction. Check references: It is particularly important to talk to towns that have several years of park experience behind them. Look for references whose parks are at least five years old. And then ask questions: Are the local skaters happy? Has park use increased or decreased over time? Do skaters of all ages and abilities use the park? What is the annual budget for maintenance? Has the skating surface been replaced? Have any pieces of equipment been retired from use? Exactly what is covered by the warranty? Have there been problems with vandalism? (Vandalism is often an indicator of community dissatisfaction.)

Communities should keep in mind that building a skatepark is a major investment. Planning for long-term satisfaction is the key to success.