



PARKS & OPEN SPACE

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

creating space for everyone



Cover page photo credits. In order from left to right
Top row: Sandy Muir Dodd, Maritime River Photography, Chasity Zwicker
Bottom row: Maritime River Photography, Chasity Zwicker, Maritime River Photography

Glossary

Accessible for the purpose of this document refers to reducing and removing barriers to improve accessibility in outdoor public spaces. It does not infer spaces will be fully accessible without barriers.

Active Recreation is participation in activities that require the expenditure of energy. It can also be associated with activities that require constructed amenities or infrastructure.

Asset Management is a planned, integrated, lifecycle approach for managing and investing in infrastructure to maximize benefits, manage risk and provide sustainable, satisfactory levels of service to the public.

Destination Park is a park that highlights an attraction, natural feature or built amenity.

Conservation Land refers to land purchased or acquired for the purpose of conserving, protecting, or restoring a significant ecosystem, habitat and/or species.

Level of Service refers to the service level delivered to the public. This can include the selection of services provided, the standard of infrastructure or the standard to which an asset is maintained.

Management Agreement refers to a legal agreement between the Municipality and an Association for the development, maintenance and operation of municipally owned land.

Neighbourhood Park is a smaller, strategically located park within a neighbourhood that serves the open space needs of local residents; amenities often include playgrounds, greenscapes (large unprogrammed lawn) and natural areas.

Open Space refers to undeveloped publicly owned or publicly accessible land; can include green space and municipal parks.

Outhouse for the purpose of this document refers to a vault privy defined as a self-contained waterless toilet.

Park refers to an area of natural, semi-natural or planted space set aside for human enjoyment and recreation or for the protection of wildlife or natural habitats.

Park Amenities means what improvements can be found in a park or open space.

Parkette is a small property or park that provides passive recreational opportunities. These sites are resting/gathering spaces that may include landscapes, gardens or provide access to water.

Passive Recreation refers to recreational activities that require minimal alteration to the landscape; passive recreational activities generally require minimal resources as a result they are highly compatible with natural resource protection.

Porta-Potty for the purpose of this document refers to a portable or mobile waterless toilet.

Recreation is the experience that results from freely-chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

Regional Park refers to a large, multi-use park that provides both active and passive recreational opportunities; generally, has a significant built environment with amenities that attract users from outside the immediate neighbourhood.

Sport Park refers to land developed as a venue for athletic or sports teams activities or events.

Washroom for the purpose of this document refers to an inclusive enclosed washroom providing a barrier-free toilet and sink and turning space to accomodate a wheeled mobility device.

Wayfinding refers to the identification of assets and provides information for navigation.

1.0 Introduction

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg is located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kma'ki People. The Municipality acknowledges and honours the spiritual, cultural and economic connection the Mi'kma'ki had and continue to have, as the traditional keepers of the land, waters and resources in which we have the privilege to live.

Located on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL) borders the Districts of Chester and Queens and surrounds the Towns of Bridgewater, Mahone Bay and Lunenburg. The geographical region, a relatively rural landscapes of shorelines, lakes, rivers, wetlands and forests, spans over 1,700 square kilometers. It is the richness and diversity of culture, history and ecology that has attracted and continues to attract people to the region.

MODL spaces provide both active and passive recreation opportunities, some spaces are left undeveloped to allow natural processes to occur and others protect environmentally significant areas and wildlife habitat. Intentional planning creates a park and open space system that delivers the outcomes established by council, community feedback and the planning documents.

MODL's Vision, Mission, and Values statements guide the overall direction for municipal management; the Active Transportation Plan provides direction on the support and development of connections between our local communities; the Active Living Strategic Plan sets goals for public education and removing barriers for including active living in daily routines and the Strategic Priorities, set by council, help guide the budget and focus the work of the Municipality. Most recently, council adopted the Local Climate Change Action Plan 2030, that will guide the municipality "toward achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and support a climate-resilient, healthier, and sustainable future."^[1]

In 2002-03, MODL undertook an extensive planning process that resulted in the creation of the Open Space Strategic Plan. The Plan directs the development, purchase and sale of Municipal properties. The Open Space Plan was reviewed 2010 and amended to reflect the status of identified goals. "Developing minimum parks standards according to use" is identified as an area to be considered for policy development and implementation within the Open Space Strategic Plan.

[1] Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, 2022. Local Climate Change Action Plan 2030.

Many of the goals and recommendations set forth in Open Space Strategic Plan have been achieved. A few recommendations remain outstanding and relevant even though the community has grown and changed considerably since the creation of the original plan and subsequent review.

The demographics of our communities and how people recreate is changing. National trends demonstrate individuals preferring passive recreation opportunities moving away from organized sports and activities. Highlighted by the pandemic, parks, trails and open space has seen a significant increase in use. Evolving with the needs of the community, Council has set a strategic priority to upgrade MODL spaces to accommodate the current and future needs of residents.

2.0 Community Benefit

Recreation is defined as “the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing”.^[2] MODLs investment in parks, trails and open spaces has tangible benefits for the individual and the community. Parks support community and individual well-being by providing space that encourages participation in recreation. Not only do these spaces contribute to the health and resiliency of the community by promoting the pursuit of recreational and leisure activities, they simultaneously preserve the ecological health of the natural environment. The National Benefits Hub, a source for evidence-based research that supports the necessity of providing recreation spaces, groups the benefits into four categories which are summarized below.

PERSONAL

- Extends life expectancy
- Prolongs independent living
- Reduces risk of heart disease & stroke
- Prevents/reduces risk for diabetes & arthritis
- Contributes to mental health & well-being
- Enhances physical & emotional health
- Improves quality of life

BENEFITS OF PARKS & OPEN SPACES

SOCIAL

- Leisure activities & parks enhance perceived/actual quality of life and place/infrastructure
- Reduces self-destructive behaviour & crime
- Reduces isolation & loneliness
- Contributes to building strong, self-sufficient & sustainable communities
- Creates a sense of belonging within a community
- Builds pride in communities

ENVIRONMENTAL

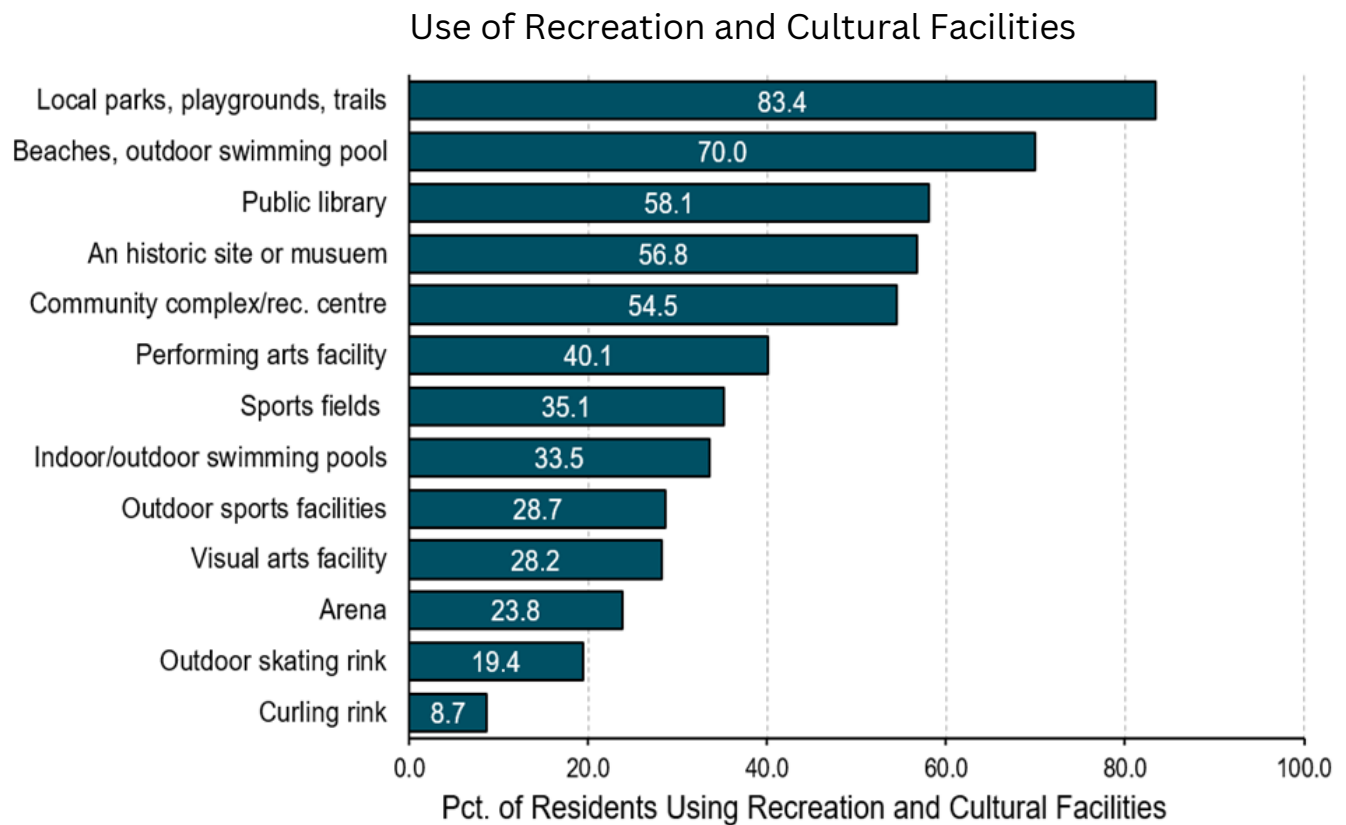
- Protects habitat & biodiversity
- Improves air quality
- Encourages active transportation
- Provides space for environmental & personal health education
- Mitigates potential environmental disaster
- Encourages stewardship
- Essential to overall good health, quality of life & well-being

ECONOMIC

- Reduces healthcare costs related to illness &/or disability
- Reduces social services costs
- Improve work performance & productivity
- Attract businesses & tourism to the community
- Excellent for storm water retention
- Increase property values
- Increase tax revenue

^[2] Interprovincial Sports and Recreation Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015. Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing.

The Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative aims to measure the lives and wellbeing of residents by looking beyond economic indicators and examining the perceived quality of life. Over 12,000 individuals from across the province participated in the Engage Nova Scotia 230-question survey. Part of the research focused on how residents are spending their leisure time and accessing recreational opportunities, see graph below [3]. These results are indicative of the intrinsic value parks, playgrounds and trails have on quality of life and the necessity for local government to ensure all residents have the opportunity to access these services.

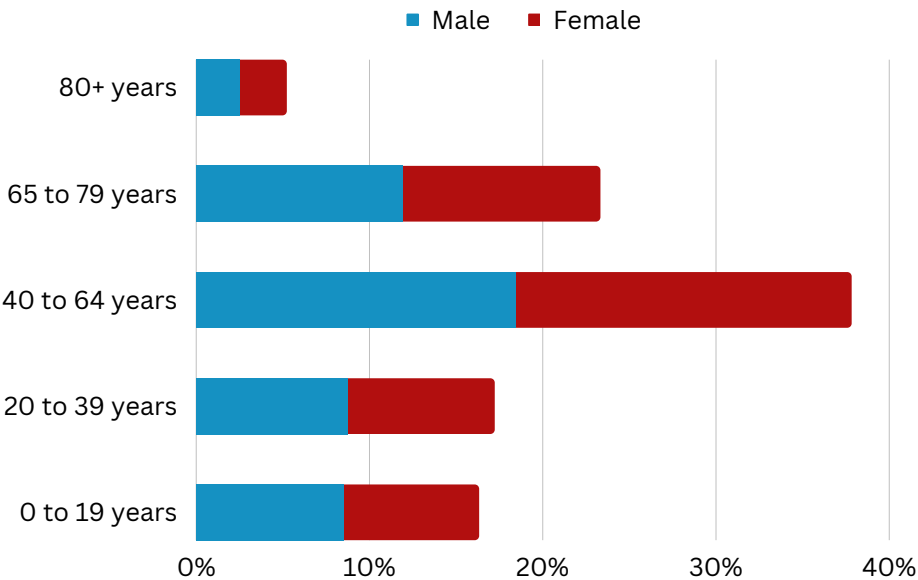


[3] Supplementary Analysis, prepared by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, using the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey March, 2020.

3.0 Community Information

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg has a population of 25,545 (Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population) an increase of 2.7% from the 2016 census.

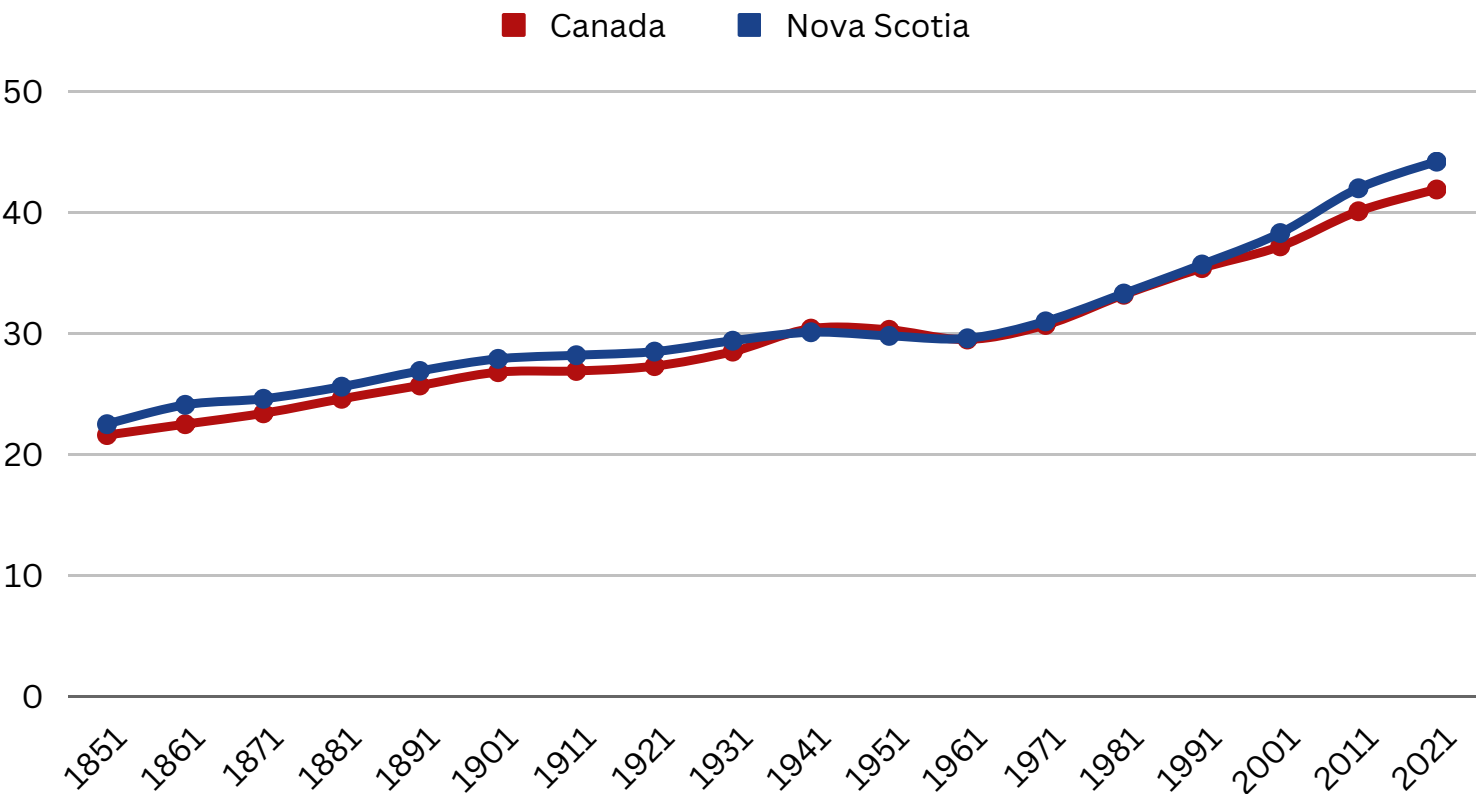
Almost 30% of the population is over 65 years of age in comparison to the rest of the country, where seniors make up 19% of the total population.



The census data indicates that in Nova Scotia the:

- average age is increasing
- population is growing
- average age is higher than the rest of the country

The changing demographics can provide challenges for aging recreation facilities and spaces.



4.0 Guidance, Vision & Principles

In 2015, A Framework for Recreation in Canada was released; this document provided a new vision for the provision of recreational services. An initiative that was led by provincial and territorial governments, the Framework consists of five pillars referred to as the calls to actions to assist with decision-making, management and delivery of recreation policies and practices. The Framework is nationally regarded as a guide for public recreation providers and has been adopted by Nova Scotia Government.

The five pillars of the Framework for Recreation:



Goal 1 **Active Living**

Foster active living through physical recreation.



Goal 2 **Inclusion and Access**

Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.



Goal 3 **Connecting People and Nature**

Help people connect to nature through recreation.



Goal 4 **Supportive Environments**

Ensure the provision of supportive physical & social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.



Goal 5 **Recreation Capacity**

Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

The vision, mission and values statements for MODL provide direction for current and future municipal operations. These statements are intended to communicate and inform the public the guiding principles to how the stated goals and objectives will be achieved.

Vision

The breathtaking, natural beauty of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg is home to thriving communities with unique cultural identities. Growth centres support our diversified economies, driven by our residents' passion for the place they call home.

With our strong economy, we can live, work and raise families here. We are a destination for visitors, attracted to our vibrant parks, beaches, and hiking trails. As leaders in sustainability, we passionately protect our natural environment.

Mission

We are:

- Responsible financial managers
- Strategic planners
- Sustainable community builders
- Collaborative engagers

Values

- Thriving Communities: We encourage meaningful connections.
- Act with Integrity: We are accountable and strive to provide exceptional leadership within our municipality.
- Respect and Kindness: We value the uniqueness and diversity of our communities, welcoming everyone with respect and kindness.
- Equity and Inclusion: We take action to change and grow to be a truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive municipality.
- Ready for Action!: We are innovators, economic leaders, and collaborative partners.

This Park Standards and Guideline (PSG) document provides a clear and principle-focused approach to park maintenance and planning. In alignment with MODLs Vision, Mission and Values and with consideration to the five pillars outlined in **A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015**, the classification system clearly articulates the goals and priorities MODL has regarding the provisions of parks and open spaces.

The PSG is comprised of two components:

1. Parks and Open Space Classifications

The classifications define the types of parks within the municipality that contribute to a well-balanced, cohesive parks and open space system.

2. Park Amenities

The park amenities provide direction on what features/components are to be provided with each park. The amenities are defined by park classification and are the **minimum standard** for the park classification

This document does not include budgetary implications or an assessment of current staff capacity or requirements for the implementation of the standards set forth. This process did not include a gap analysis.

The park standards

- clearly define the intended purpose and uses
- ensures consistency in standards and service delivery
- provides an intentional spectrum of opportunities across the district
- accounts for the needs and abilities of all community members
- ensures the minimum standards set for municipalities in the NS Accessibility Legislation are met*
- include the minimum amenity requirements for each category

Levels of service will include the selection of services provided, the standard of infrastructure and/or the standard to which an asset is maintained. The levels of service for each category shall be determined at the operational level based on priorities set by council and in alignment with this standards document. The financial implications of service levels shall be included in the annual operating budget.

MODL shall endeavour to create a cohesive uniform look across the municipality within parks and outdoor spaces. In practice, consistent wording and designs will be used on all signage. Recognition and uniformity shall be created with amenities and park furnishings as replaced. The ultimate goal is cohesion and brand recognition as an MODL park.

*At the time of this document, only interim guidelines are in place for Nova Scotia

5.0 Park Categories

REGIONAL PARK

Large, multi-use park that meets the needs of a large geographical area; provides both active and passive recreational opportunities; generally, has a significant built environment with amenities that attract users from outside the immediate neighbourhood. The focus of a regional park is meeting community-based needs and serving a broader purpose than neighbourhood parks and parkettes

DESTINATION PARK

A park that highlights an attraction, natural feature or built amenity.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK

A park strategically located within a neighbourhood intended to be accessed by active transportation means. Typically, a smaller, local park that serves the open space needs of local residents. Often include amenities such as playgrounds, greenscapes (large unprogrammed lawn) and natural areas.

PARKETTE

A small park or property that provides passive recreational opportunities. These sites are resting/gathering spaces that may include landscapes, gardens or provide access to water.

CONSERVATION LAND

Land purchased or acquired for the purpose of conserving, protecting, or restoring a significant ecosystem, habitat and/or species. This designation is intended to minimize disturbance of the lands, use shall be limited to low-impact (passive) recreational uses and non-invasive scientific research.

SPORT PARK

Land developed as a venue for athletic or sports teams activities or events.

REGIONAL PARK



Large, multiuse park, active and passive rec opportunities; significant built amenities; attracts users from outside immediate neighbourhood.

REGIONAL PARKS

- Municipal Activity & Recreation Complex (MARC)
- River Ridge Common
- Wiles Lake Park*

WAYFINDING

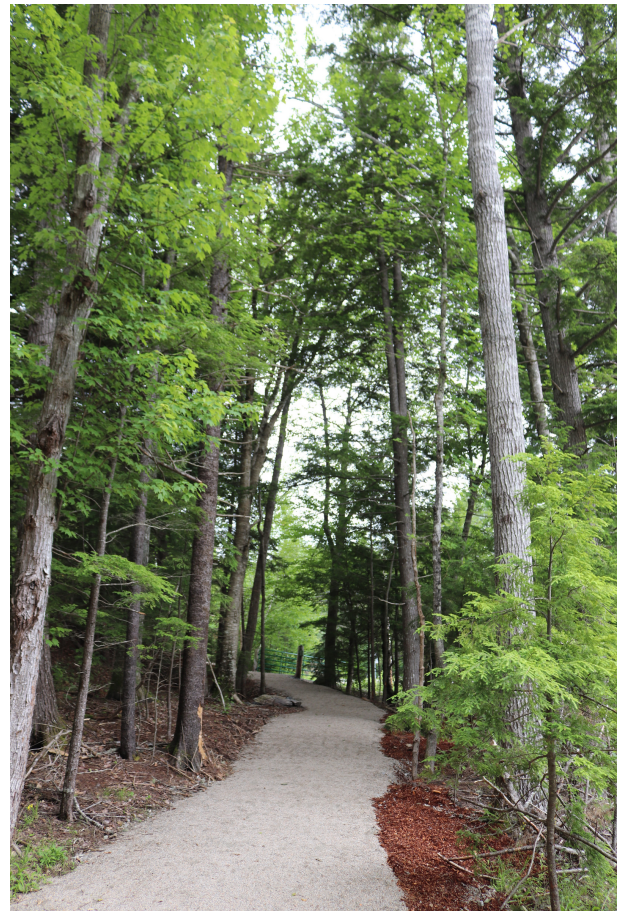
- Park gate
- Park beacon
- Vehicular directional
- Interior kiosk



AMENITIES

Minimum standard for this category:

- Open year-round
- Washroom/outhouse
- Waste receptacles
- Dog waste system
- 10+ defined parking spaces
- Accessible park furnishings
- 1 accessible park
- 1 accessible playground in this category



DESTINATION PARK



A park that highlights an attraction, natural feature or built amenity.

DESTINATION PARKS

- Church Lake
- Hirtle's Beach
- Indian Falls
- Indian Path Common
- Miller Point Peace Park
- Mushamush Beach Park
- Pinegrove Park
- Sawpit Wharf

WAYFINDING

- Park gate
- Park beacon
- Vehicular directional



AMENITIES

Minimum standard for this category:

- 10% open year-round
- Washroom/outhouse/porta-potty seasonally
- Waste receptacles
- Dog waste system
- 5+ defined parking spaces
- 20% in this category seasonally accessible
- Accessible park furnishings



Photos by Maritime River Photography

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK



Strategically located within a neighbourhood, typically smaller, local park.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS

- LaHave Sunset Park
- Molega Lake Park
- Petite Riviere Community Park**
- Rose Bay Marine Park**
- United Communities Marine Park**

WAYFINDING

- Park gate
- Park beacon
- Vehicular directional?

AMENITIES

Minimum standard for this category:

- 25% open year-round
- 25% with seasonal outhouse/porta-potty
- Waste receptacles – seasonal
- 10% in this category will provide parking
- Park furnishings
- 20% in this category will provide accessible features



Photo by Kas Stone



Photo by Chasity Zwicker

** Denotes Management Agreement in place

PARKETTE



A small park or property that provides passive rec opportunities. Resting/gathering spaces – provide access to water.

PARKETTES

- Indian Point Rest Stop
- Masons Beach Access
- Sand Dollar Beach
- Sucker Lake Park**
- Old Southeast Cove Wharf Day Park
- Westhavers Beach

WAYFINDING

- ID Sign – TBD

AMENITIES

Minimum standard for this category:

- Seasonal
- 10% in this designation will provide parking



** Denotes Management Agreement in place

CONSERVATION LAND



Land purchased or acquired for the purpose of conserving, protecting or restoring a significant ecosystem, habitat and/or species.

AMENITIES

Minimum standard for this category:

- None

CONSERVATION LAND

- Cape LaHave Islands
- Oakland Conservation Area
- Oxners Beach
- Shaubac Lands

WAYFINDING

- ID Sign - TBD



Photo by Paul H Williams

SPORT PARK



Land developed as a venue for athletic or sports teams activities or events.

SPORT FACILITIES

- Municipal Activity Recreation Complex – MARC Ballfields
- Centre Soccer Field
- Pickleball Courts

AMENITIES

Minimum standard for this category include:

- parking
- Washroom/outhouse/porta-potty

WAYFINDING

- Vehicular directional
- ID sign – TBD
- Park beacon



6.0 Accessibility

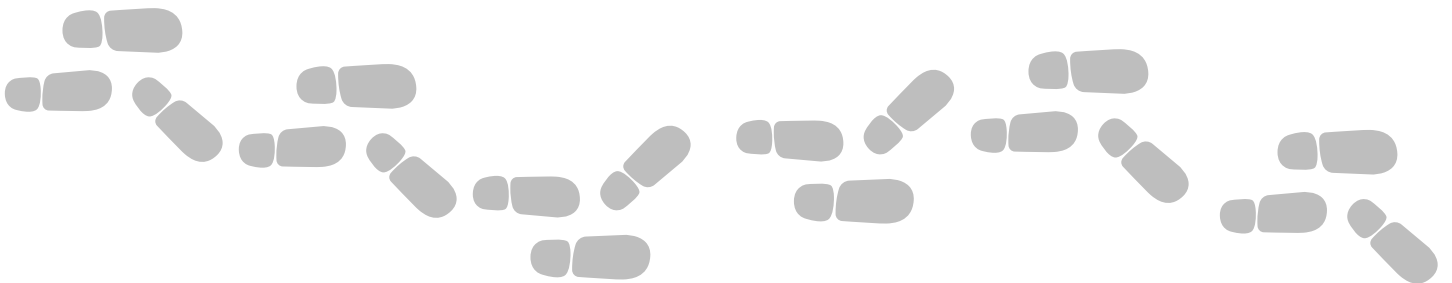
Accessible, for the purpose of this document, refers to reducing and removing barriers to improve access to outdoor public spaces. It does not infer spaces will provide universal access.

MODL is committed to employing the core principles from the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces, 2022 and any subsequent legislation. The municipality will provide access to a variety of outdoor spaces across the district and the categories to people with diverse abilities.

- An accessibility lens shall be applied for all new park development and upgrades.
- Where universal accessibility is not possible, MODL shall ensure meaningful opportunities for participation within the overall park design.
- Universal design concepts shall be applied where and when practical when upgrading and/or replacing park amenities.
- Park and open space written material shall be updated to include more detailed information about sites and amenities.

7.0 Next Steps

- Create an implementation and evaluation strategy
- Develop an asset management strategy, identifying costs to maintain spaces
- Complete life cycle audits for park amenities
 - Include playgrounds in asset management/replacement plan
- Conduct a recreation use/needs assessment and gap analysis
 - identify opportunities for redevelopment, renovation or decommissioning
- Establish a pest control policy
- Establish a Commemorative Parks Program



MODL Parks

Park Category

- Regional
- Destination
- Neighbourhood
- Parkette
- Conservation
- Sport

- Provincial Road
- Municipal Road
- Private Road
- Rail-Trail Network (with agreements)
- Municipal/Town Boundary
- Council Districts 2016

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF LUNENBURG

Sources: Digital Base Map Data from the Nova Scotia Geomatics Centre, Amherst, NS

Disclaimer: Information compiled from numerous sources and may not be complete or accurate. Graphical representation only.

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Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

