

## River Ridge Common

Nova Scotia Trunk 10, New Germany, NS

### PROJECT COMPONENTS:

- River Ridge Common is a 115-acre outdoor recreation site that offers various facilities:
  - Picnic areas
  - Naturalized playground
  - 3 km of accessible walking trails
  - 4+ km of mountain biking trail
  - Mountain bike skills area and pump track (added in Summer of 2020)



### RATIONALE FOR INITIATIVE:

- The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg's Open Space Strategic Plan identified the need for a recreation facility in the northern part of Lunenburg County
- In 2002, 52 sites were recommended in Lunenburg County for outdoor unstructured recreation, parks, etc.
  - 26 of these were completed within the first several years, and all 52 were fulfilled in 8 years
- Land that was already owned was developed into recreation facilities as well as newly acquired land
  - Access to water was a listed as a priority (wetlands, etc.) for community members to enjoy peepers and dragonflies
- Community members were consulted prior to development, and questions such as "where did you play as a child?" and "what activities did you value at 10 years old?" indicated that open fields, forests without trails, and riverbanks were popular among residents
- The closest similar-style park is M.A.R.C. Trail system in Dayspring NS (approx 1 hour drive away)

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- Local NSCC Campus students in the Natural Resources and Environment Technology program helped to develop the trail system and park
- The municipality hosted "trail build days" with students from NSCC and New Germany Rural High school including the O2 forestry program. Keen teach with keen teachers during the development. Students work on the trail by gravelling, raking, etc.
- Trails are accessible from New Germany Elementary School; the school acquired an UpLift grant and decided to spend it on bikes to use on trails at River Ridge Common

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Over a years' worth of extensive public consultation with community members.
- Municipality of the District of Lunenburg worked with community partners to form an organization and do lots of community outreach to ensure the facility was what the community wanted and needed

### POPULATION SERVED:

- Everyone; children, adults, families, seniors

### FINANCES:

- Building and maintaining the park is mainly funded through the municipal budget
- Additional funding for the initial build:
  - Partners through Nova Scotia department of Communities, Culture and Heritage
  - Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
  - Community funds



### WHO USES IT:

- Retirees walk in the park often to get physical activity.
- Children take part in unsupervised play by walking along short “goat paths” with a maximum length of 100m that loop from the main trail featuring log bridges, steppingstones, and handrails. Parents can stay nearby on the main trail system while children play on the smaller trails.
- There are opportunities for older children to use pump track while parents stay nearby to encourage individual exploration. This is most frequently used by the 7-10 age group.
- Young adults report purchasing mountain bikes to use the trails with their friends.

### EVALUATION:

- River Ridge Common exceeded the community members expectations. The Municipality of Lunenburg asked community members for comments and suggestions after opening, and ~98% of the comments received are compliments
- River Ridge Common currently holds a 4.9/5-star rating on Google
- Community members have given lots of suggestions, but no complaints

### CHALLENGES:

- Coordinating funding sources
  - Ensuring all funds come in at the right time
- Creating a space for and please as many people as possible
  - Wanted to create a quality space, even if it's smaller than anticipated
- Accessibility standards are not yet adopted in Nova Scotia but wanted to make the space as accessible as possible
  - There are no construction standards to follow in Nova Scotia, but used standards set by U.S. National Park Service and Rick Hansen Foundation
  - Cannot say that it is built to an accessible standard, but “supports accessible use.”
  - Ground truthing, which is to validate by direct observation on the ground, with locals, and run practice tests to point out errors

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT INITIATIVE:

- Currently open May – October with no winter maintenance
  - However, lots of feedback requesting to keep park open year-round

### WHATS NEXT:

- Mountain bike component
  - Already have beginner skills park, building intermediate skills park
- On-site staff: need to build office space/shelter for staff but ideally 2 full-time and 5 seasonal staff will be employed
  - With the growing trails, etc. there is a need to have someone around for inspection.
- Interactive art park

### ADVICE FOR OTHERS:

- Get accessibility tests and consult with experts (ex: Fulcrum Accessibility Consulting) to make sure everything is included to ensure it is useful to everybody
  - Reach out to local abilities workshop or other Nova Scotia organizations to get in touch with people to test accessibility of project
  - Build these tests and consultations into budget and be prepared to make changes



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