

Victoria Park

29 Park Road, Truro, Nova Scotia

PROJECT COMPONENTS:

- Victoria Park is more than 130 years old, originally opening on July 5, 1888
- The park consists of 3000 acres of natural woodland in the heart of Truro, there are over 35 kms of walking and hiking trails including the 175-step Jacob's Ladder
- Natural features of the park include a dramatic steep-sided gorge, a winding river, waterfalls and an old-growth Eastern Hemlock forest containing 250-year-old trees
- Features: playground, bike park, tennis courts, baseball field
- Summer seasonal features:
 - Canteen
 - Water spray park
 - Victoria park pool, which includes a toddlers pool, water spray features, double water slide, lane swimming and diving board
- An additional 40+ kms of trails are available in the winter for cross-country skiing, skate skiing, snowshoeing and fat-biking in the attached Railyard Mountain Bike Park
- Newest feature: The Railyard Mountain Bike Park
 - The Railyard Mountain Bike Park consists of over 40 kms of bike trails providing mountain biking opportunities for all skill levels from beginners through "extreme" riders
 - This also features a pump track and a skills park

RATIONALE FOR INITIATIVE:

- The Railyard Mountain Bike Park started as a network of informal biking trails created by the community, which have been there for over two decades
- In the last 5 years the Town of Truro has worked with them to build trails and take back control of the development of the park, and branded it as the Railyard Mountain Bike Park
- In 2017, the Town of Truro decided to expand Victoria Park. The watershed was designated as part of the park, expanding it from 400 to nearly 3000 acres
- The park is designed to provide a plethora of experiences and contains a bike skills park, short track area, and a wide range of technical trails and enhanced terrain features
- Signage for within the park and a marketing plan were created. Since then, usage of the park has boomed

RAILYARD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Town of Truro hosted a community meeting with consultants, mountain bikers and park users from different backgrounds
 - Outcome: [Railyard Mountain Bike Park | Strategy and Master Plan](#), a 10-year working document was created, recognizing that this plan may change throughout the years
- There was no specific youth targeted engagement, however there were some youth present as part of the community engagement

POPULATION SERVED:

- The park is used by everyone from all ages



WHO USES IT:

- Colchester Short Track program created in 2009, run by volunteers
 - They offer a six-week program in the spring and a four week program in the fall that takes place on select nights at the top of Victoria Park. All bike types (run bikes, push bikes, mountain bikes, fat bikes, etc.) are welcome. Arranged by age group, the goal is to get as many laps in as you can within your time slot.
 - This program gathers 210 riders in the spring, and 190 in the fall.
 - Started at 15 members, and has risen to 150+
 - Based on the Railyard Masterplan, this group of volunteers along with other Mountain Bike Volunteers have come together to register themselves as a not-for-profit organization
- This group will manage the Colchester Short Track, act as an advisory group to the Town of Truro, and assist with Volunteer Trail Maintenance Days

FINANCES:

- Victoria Park is mainly funded through the Town of Truro
- Some funds come from volunteer group fundraising



EVALUATION:

- Most of the feedback for Victoria Park is from social media
- Project Steering Committee: composed of a diverse group of mountain bikers, the Steering Committee is used as an advisory board to identify the key issues and challenges for the Mountain Bike Park, as well as discuss recent development initiatives and their success or failure
 - They meet monthly, are consulted before major decisions, and lead the short track program

CHALLENGES:

- "Share the Trail": There are four types of users on the trail system: mountain bikers (skinny and fat tires), walkers and hikers, cross-country skiers and straight skiers, and snowshoers. The challenge is to ensure everyone is happy and using the trails properly
- Lately there has been an increase in people participating in outdoor recreation which results in more people driving too fast on the trails and in areas with lots of walkers. This creates a safety issue

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT INITIATIVE:

- Free public access and open year-round

WHATS NEXT:

- Just two years ago – Railyard Mountain Bike Park was just a community space, now it's a destination. To accommodate the large influx of users – the next step is to build proper facilities on that side of Victoria Park including water, washrooms, meeting area
- Another goal is to connect the loops, create signage and colour-coded maps
- All of these are budget-dependent

ADVICE FOR OTHERS:

- The biggest thing is to communicate community engagement and offer community engagement opportunities
- Ensure people understand what you're doing and that you're trying to build something for everyone, not trying to take things away from one user group
- Make sure you get that message out – building things for the whole community

FURTHER INFORMATION: ASHLEY SIMMS, ASIMMS@TRURO.CA