

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

# Runnymede Park Improvements

## Phase 1: Exploring Options Public Meeting Summary Report

June 7, 2023

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## Introduction

The City engaged community members from the Junction Area near [Runnymede Park](#) regarding the upcoming improvements slated for the site located at [221 Ryding Avenue](#). This project is supported by the City's [Partnership Opportunities Legacy \(POL\)](#) program, reflecting the City's commitment to collaborative neighbourhood initiatives. The proposed enhancements to the park are intended to offer additional opportunities for the community to gather and engage in recreational activities, and to encourage a sense of unity and enjoyment for all residents.

### Phase 1: Exploring Options

The objective of this phase is to present and collect feedback and preferences on the draft design options for Runnymede Park. These options include two park layouts, namely Nature Park and Rail Park, along with four playground design options (two for each park layout). Images of each design option can be found in *Appendix A – Presentation Images*.

The development of the park layout and playground design options were informed by insights gathered from the online visioning survey, which was open for public input from March 2 to March 17, 2023. Additionally, two Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings were held on January 25 and February 13, 2023 to further involve the community. Summary reports of each engagement opportunity can be found on the project webpage.

The feedback received during the June 7 in-person meeting on the draft designs will play a pivotal role in determining the preferred park design direction. The preferred park design will be shared through an online survey in Fall 2023.

The following sections provide a summary of communications with the local community and the in-person public meeting, including summaries of what the project team (or, "we") heard.

## How We Reached People

The community was informed of engagement activities through social and print media, listed below:

### Print Media

#### Community Mail Outs (Postcards)

4,504 postcards advertising the project webpage and public meeting were delivered to addresses in the neighbourhood within 500m of the site.

#### Park signage

Signs advertising the meeting were displayed in the park.

### Digital Media

#### Project Webpage

A webpage ([toronto.ca/RunnymedePark](https://toronto.ca/RunnymedePark)) was set up to act as a communications portal to inform the public about the new park project. The webpage hosts up to date information regarding the project, including a sign-up button for e-updates.

#### eFlyer

A digital flyer was circulated to community groups and the Councillor's Office for additional distribution.

#### Social Media and Digital Ads

The City of Toronto used its Facebook and Instagram accounts to promote the in-person public meeting through paid advertisements and organic posts from May 29 to June 7, 2023.

## What We Heard – Public Meeting

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, local community residents, including some neighbouring Runnymede Park, participated in an in-person public meeting at the [David Appleton Community Centre](#). The meeting was hosted by City Staff from the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) Division and included participation of landscape architecture design consultants from Thinc Design. Councillor Nunziata attended. We shared draft design options for the park layout and playground. The feedback we collected at the meeting will inform the final preferred design.

The presentation slides are available on the project webpage: [Toronto.ca/RunnymedePark](https://toronto.ca/RunnymedePark).

The summary is structured as follows:

1. Summary of Discussion
2. Feedback/Question about the Draft Designs



**Note:** The following summary is not intended to be a verbatim transcript of what was discussed during the meeting. Key points from all questions and information shared during the meeting are summarized. Additionally, this summary does not assess the merit or accuracy of participants' perspectives, nor does it indicate an endorsement of any perspectives on the part of the City of Toronto.

## Summary of Discussion

During the meeting community members posed inquiries to gain a better understanding of the park's prospective uses, proposed amenities, and design details such as surfacing materials, playground equipment, and safety measures. These inquiries reflected the community's commitment to ensuring the park's suitability and enjoyment for all residents.

## Feedback/Questions about the Draft Designs

Community members' feedback on the draft designs are summarized below. Feedback shared by participants appears first, followed by responses provided by the project team in *italics*.

- **Question about the fence along the west side of the playground.** Participants asked if the fence along the playground would be maintained, as it helps keep dogs out of the playground.  
*City Staff noted that the current fence will not remain, but the designs include a seat wall and path along the east side of the playground instead.*
- **Question about fixed seating.** A participant asked if the seating will be fixed in place.  
*City Staff shared that all seating in the park will be fixed to the ground.*
- **Question about quantity and availability of drinking fountains.** Participants asked if the water bottle filling station will have a drinking fountain. Additionally, participants asked if there could be a second water bottle filling station added near the soccer field.  
*City Staff shared that the park currently has a drinking fountain that will be replaced with a water bottle-filling station and a new drinking fountain. City Staff have noted the need for additional water bottle-filling stations and drinking fountains to accommodate the growing number of park users resulting from residential developments and local sports activities and will take into consideration the idea of a water bottle filling station near the soccer field.*
- **Question about the park design decision-making process.** A participant requested clarification on the City's park design decision-making process and how agreements are reached.  
*City Staff clarified that they follow an iterative consultation and design process for park design projects, allowing public participation in developing a vision, design objectives, and schemes. Our goal is to involve community members and ensure their feedback is*

*valued and incorporated at the start of visioning, and into the draft and final preferred design phases.*

**Question about an off-leash area (OLA).** Participants raised concerns about adding an off-leash area (OLA) in Runnymede Park, because off-leash dogs in the park do not mix well with children and this has become an issue. Participants noted that a good location for an OLA would be the far south end of the park, behind the tennis court. *City Staff shared that requests for an OLA in Runnymede Park have been received, and we are aware of the concerns raised. However, we must balance these requests with input from other community members who prefer no OLA in Runnymede. Councillor Nunziata is actively exploring nearby sites that would be appropriate and feasible for an OLA. The cost of an OLA ranges from \$400,000 to \$500,000 and would be a considerable budget item. Others pointed out that even with an OLA, some dog owners might still let their dogs run off leash in the park, and that smaller dogs do not use OLAs.*

- Question about proper signage at George Bell Arena to designate permitted parking areas.** A participant asked if there is a more effective way to inform the public about appropriate parking spots at George Bell Arena. *City Staff shared that parking spaces at George Bell Arena are among the prime locations for public parking in the area. We have received complaints about park users parking along the streets during park events. We will explore opportunities to improve signage at Runnymede Park to clearly identify proper parking spots and times.*
- Question for additional waste bins in the middle of the park.** A participant asked if more waste bins could be provided near new seating areas, particularly in the centre of the park. *City Staff noted that it is challenging to accommodate additional waste bins in the center of the park because that will cause garbage trucks to drive deep into the park, which causes damage to the park. Parks Staff prefer to place waste bins at the edge of the park so that trucks do not need to enter the park.*
- Question about the capacity limits of the new seating area.** A participant asked if the new seating options could comfortably accommodate large gatherings. Suggestions were made for the inclusion of a fire pit and circular seating area to facilitate social gatherings and provide warmth. *City Staff presented two seating plans for consideration. Option 1 includes clustered seating with small tables and chairs, accommodating 4 people per cluster. Multiple clusters will be placed in the new seating area. Option 2 features a shade structure (Pergola) with a long harvest table and benches. Other elements such as seat walls, and long curved benches were also included.*

- **Question about how the project budget is being used.** A participant asked if new lighting and waste bins will be deducted from the project budget.  
*City Staff shared that the project budget does not include the cost of waste bins, they come from a separate budget. Public consultation helps us understand the community's interests and preferences, guiding the budget prioritization. There is no separate maintenance budget for replacing existing lighting in this park. Replacing light fixtures may be included in the project budget.*
- **Question about the age range for senior play equipment.** A participant requested clarification on the age range for senior play equipment.  
*City Staff stated that senior play equipment is designed for children between the ages 5 to 12.*

**Question about the material used for the play structure frame.** A participant expressed concerns about using metal in the playground structure as it can become hot during the summer season.

*City Staff shared that many playgrounds throughout the City have metal structures, as received complaints about them. PFR does not receive complaints about metal playgrounds heating up. We are aware of concerns regarding metal slides. Metal slides will not be used in the new playground.*

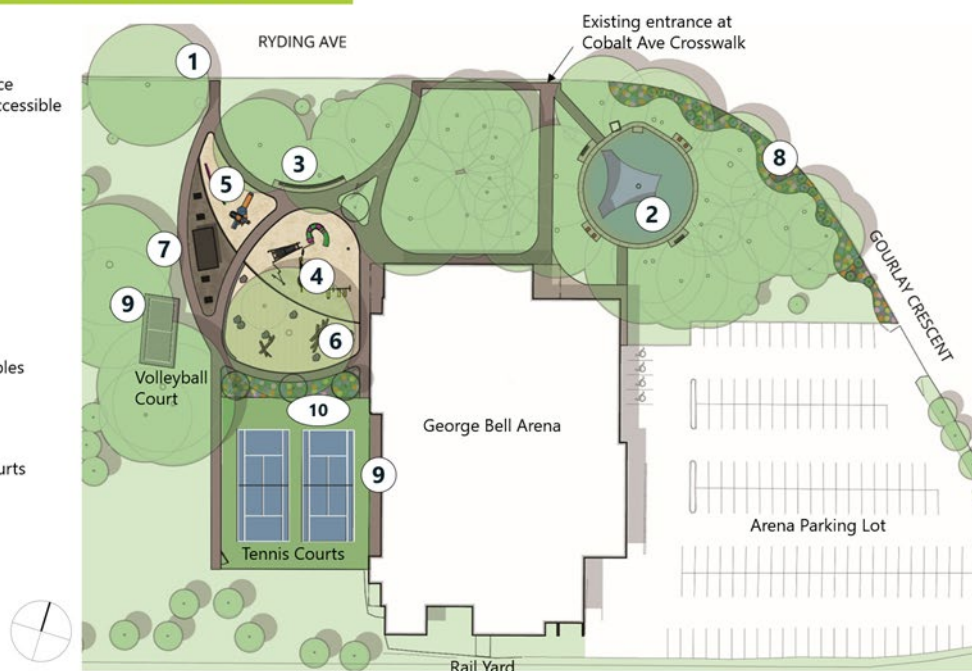
- **A comment in regards to the volleyball court surface.** A participant made a comment that sand would be a safer surfacing material for the volleyball court instead of asphalt, which can be dangerous for players.  
*City Staff noted that this can be considered, however another community member pointed out that there is a group that uses the paved surface of the volleyball court regularly. This group appears to use it the most.*



## Feedback from Table Discussions

### Design Option 1: Nature Park

- 1 New entrance at Ryding Ave
- 2 Existing wading pool with new surface treatment, additional seating, and accessible paths
- 3 Seating throughout
- 4 Senior playground
- 5 Junior playground
- 6 Nature play area with armourstone seatwall
- 7 Shade structure with small group tables
- 8 Native planting buffer
- 9 Re-surfaced tennis and volleyball courts
- 10 Community pollinator garden



### Option 1: Nature Park

Install a low fence along the playground area to deter dogs.

Ensure the playground can be used by children at least up to age 12 and teenagers.

Consider adding a designated area for birthday parties near the play structure.

Ensure the playground area has enough swings to accommodate high demand.

Provide additional seating options for large groups to gather and sit/eat together.

Consider adding a conversational firepit to promote social interactions.

Include a seesaw in the playground design.

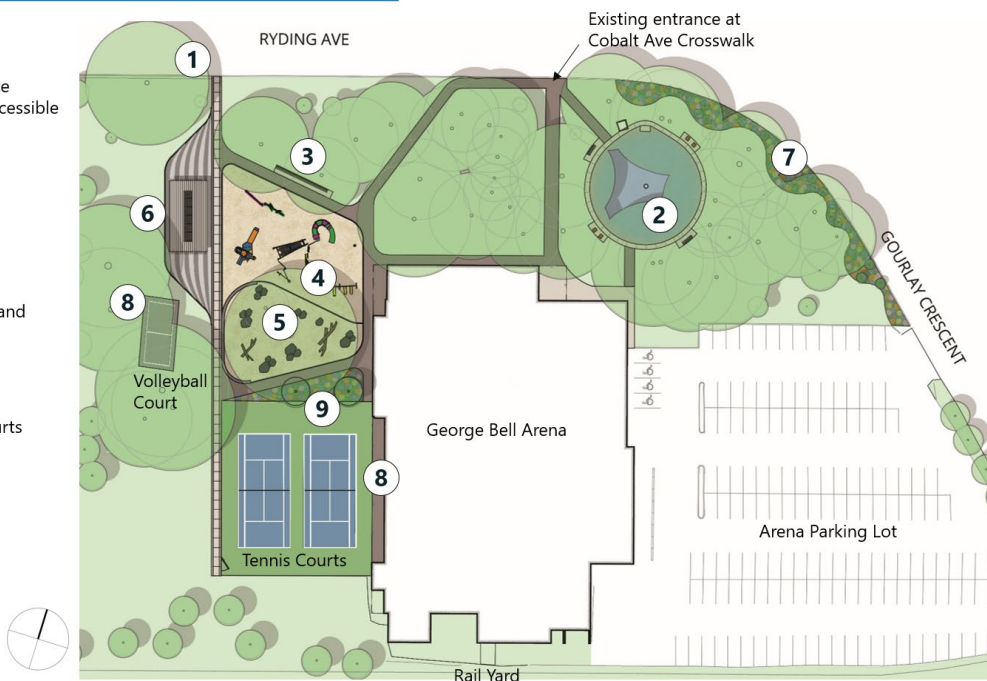
**A total of 17 participant votes were tallied for Playground Option A vs Option B which received 1.**

Images of Nature Park's Playground Option A and B can be found under Appendix B.



## Design Option 2: Rail Park

- 1 New Entrance at Ryding Ave
- 2 Existing wading pool with new surface treatment, additional seating, and accessible paths
- 3 Seating throughout
- 4 Senior and Junior playground
- 5 Nature play area with armourstone seatwall
- 6 Gathering area with shade structure and communal picnic tables
- 7 Native planting buffer
- 8 Re-surfaced tennis and volleyball courts
- 9 Pollinator gardens



### Option 2: Rail Park

Ensure the pathways create a smooth and nice flow throughout the playground.

Ensure the Rail Park design properly honours the community's rail history.

Consider adding a low fence around the play area to improve safety from dogs.

Maintain an open design for the play area.

Consider adding more communal seating areas.

A total of 10 participant votes were tallied for Playground Option A vs Option B which received 2.

Images of Rail Park's Playground Option A and B can be found under Appendix B. A few participants chose to opt-out of voting.

## General Feedback

Create a circular pathway for easy navigation around the playground

Add a fence around the playground area to separate kids from off-leash dogs

Include power outlets for events and performances

Ensure playground includes equipment for older children

Include lots of round/circular paths across the park

Make sure pollinator garden and playground are at a safe distance from each other

Include a basketball court or net

Include a squishy playground surface

## General Feedback

Include an area for dogs to play

Include a fun wooden play structure for kids to hide and seek

Include more lighting throughout the park

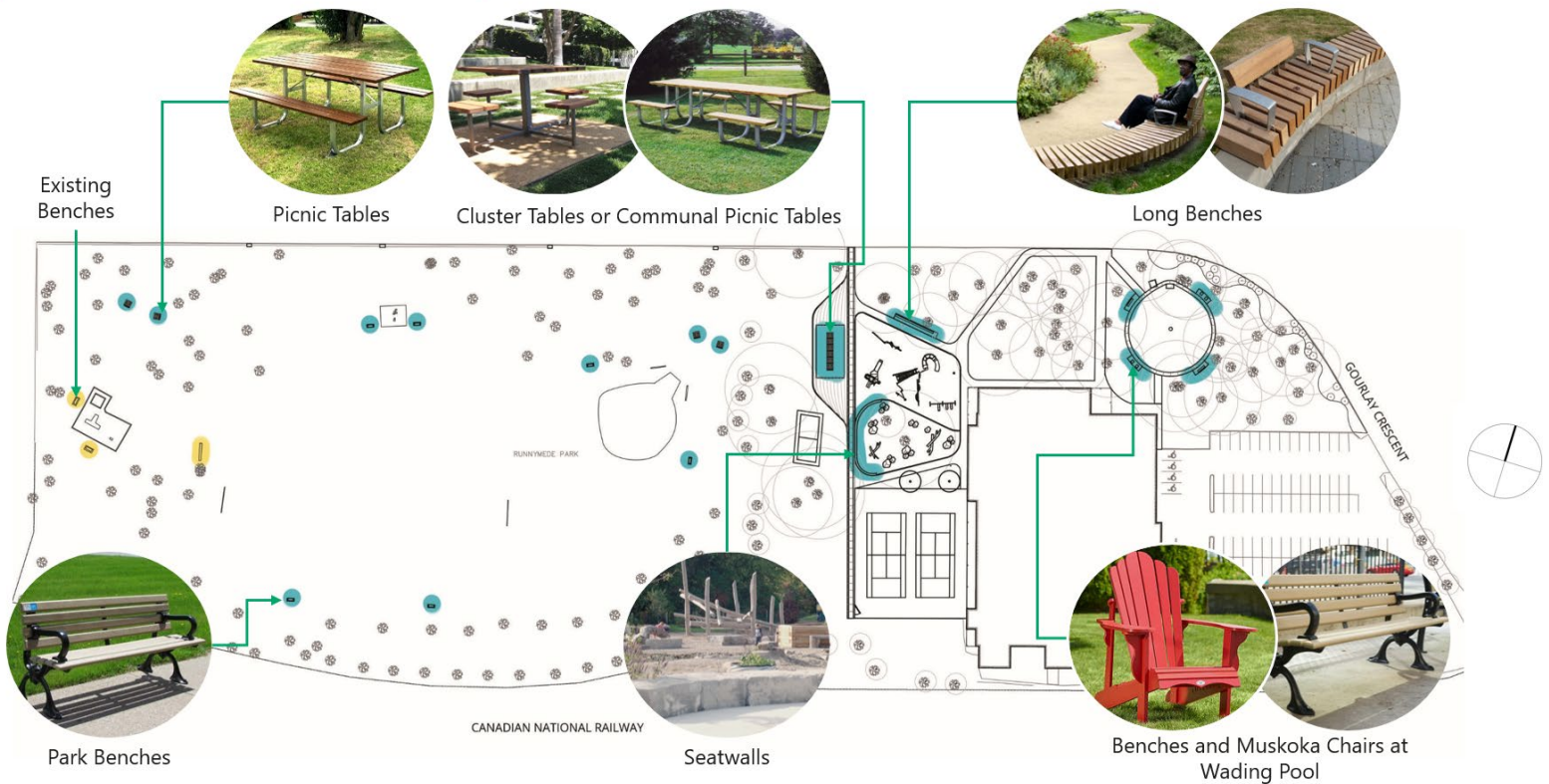
Ensure play structures/area are open and safe

Embrace the rail theme as a way to honour the community's history

Consider replacing rope play with monkey bars and rock climbing

Encourage social gathering by adding more communal seating areas

## Seating Diagram



## Park Seating Plan

Consider a social seating plan that includes circular benches that are designed to look like rail ties.

Add more benches around the rink area.

Add more seating on the south side of the park, including benches with good back support for seniors.

Increase seating along the north side of the park, particularly for birthday celebrations.

## Recommended Design Priorities for Runnymede Park Preferred Design

This section of the report provides a summary of key priorities and preferences derived from feedback from community members during the public meeting and through alternative communication channels after the meeting (all feedback is included above and in Appendix A). The following community insights will guide the development of the park's preferred design, emphasizing social spaces, diverse seating options, appropriate recreational amenities, and safety considerations for various user groups.

Community members emphasized the importance of diverse seating options. This includes the incorporation of communal seating options such as picnic tables, games tables, curvilinear seat walls, and circular seating arrangements. The preferred design should ensure that seating is thoughtfully distributed throughout the park, catering to different preferences. Moreover, there's an interest in benches with sturdy back support, acknowledging the needs of seniors who frequent the park.

Community members also expressed a need for improved social spaces. The proposed seating plan seeks to offer alternatives to traditional benches. However, residents would like the Project Team to consider the addition of a fire pit and circular seating area. These amenities would encourage social interactions and provide warmth during colder months, making the park a welcoming space year-round.

There is a desire to resurface the volleyball court with sand or grass. This aims to enhance the recreational experience and accessibility for park visitors who expressed the existing concrete surface is unsafe for players.

The preferred park design should consider the installation of additional waste bins and a second water bottle filling station near the soccer field. Additionally, enhancing signage to clearly indicate authorized parking areas at George Bell Arena is deemed important.

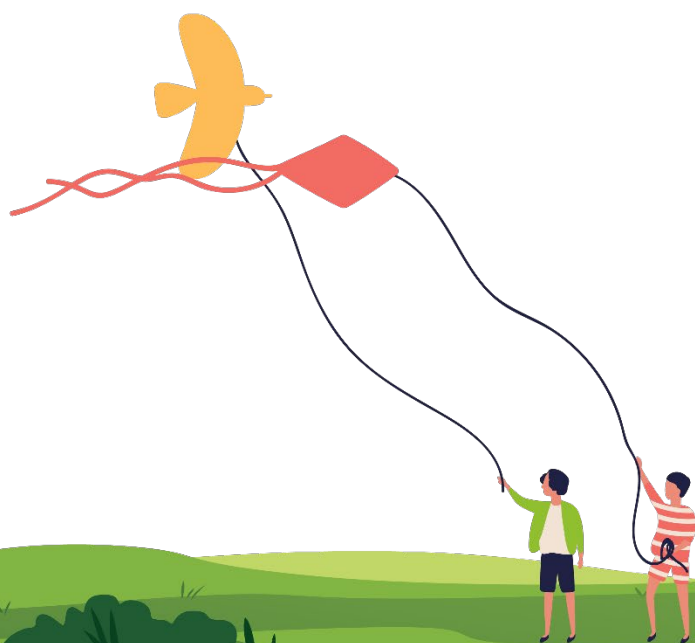
The topic of off-leash areas and dog-related concerns was also raised by community members. Ideas such as introducing a seat wall or fence on the east side of the playground should be considered to discourage dogs from entering designated play areas.

Park staff did not gather preferences using sticker dots for which park layout people preferred. Based on verbal feedback, we know that there was a stronger preference for the curvilinear layout in the Nature Park theme, **but** that people also liked the heritage representation included in the Rail Park theme. The preferred design should look to combine the two options, and seek to acknowledge the history of the railroad in the park in some way.

*The project team will consider all community feedback and insights in developing the preferred design for Runnymede Park. It is important to note that City Staff will need to harmonize the needs and preferences of all park users to ensure the preferred design reflects a park environment that is safe and enjoyable for everyone.*

## Next Steps

The feedback received in this phase of community engagement will inform priorities for the final preferred design. Once complete, the final design will be shared through an online survey. To be notified about the upcoming survey and future project updates, visit the project webpage at [toronto.ca/RunnymedePark](https://toronto.ca/RunnymedePark) to sign up for e-updates.





## Appendix A – Post-Meeting Feedback

The following summarizes additional feedback received after the meeting concluded. Feedback received by City Staff could have been obtained by email, over the phone, or in-person.

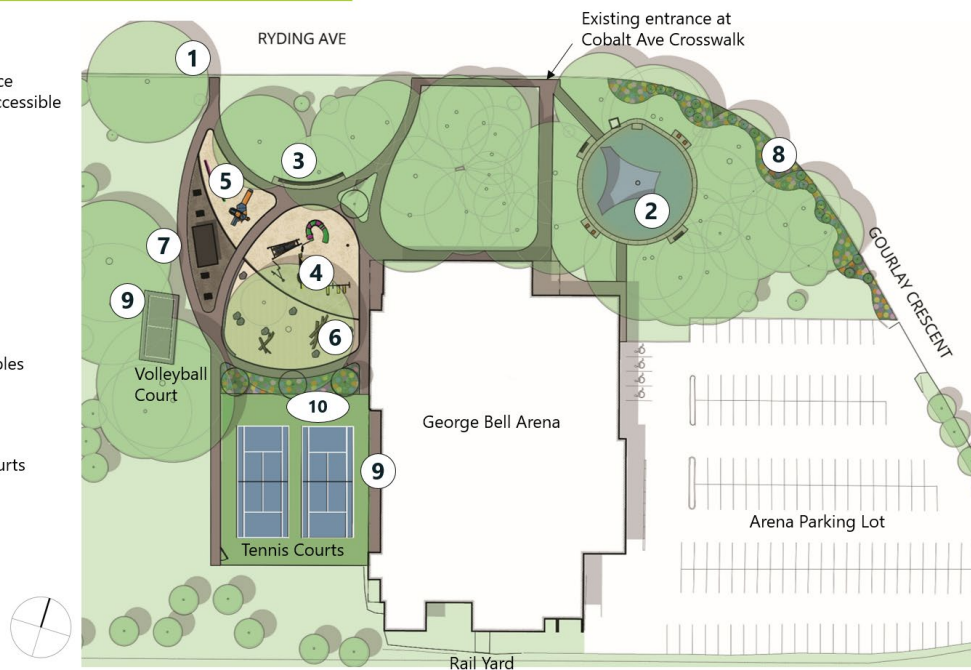
- One resident asked if there are plans to paint the tennis courts in a Pickle Ball configuration.  
*City Staff stated that Pickle Ball is a great idea and the Project Team will record their response and consider it for the Preferred Design.*
- A resident expressed concerns related to age-appropriate amenities, the need for spaces promoting independent play, and the desire for inclusion of Indigenous culture within Runnymede Park. The following summarizes the concerns received by City Staff from the resident:
  - Lack of Age-Appropriate Amenities: The resident is worried that the parks in the neighborhood tend to focus only on catering to toddlers, neglecting other age groups. They shared a personal experience of a beloved park that was updated into something unsuitable for their older nephews, forcing them to travel long distances to find a suitable park for play.
  - Need for Independent Play Space: The resident emphasizes the importance of having spaces where children can play independently, away from parental supervision, to foster their ability to adapt and problem-solve on their own.
  - Importance of Runnymede Park: Despite its current limitations, Runnymede Park holds significance for the resident's nephews as it offers a place for simple fun and physical activity without requiring an excessively long walk.
  - Desire for Inclusion of Indigenous Culture: The resident, being Indigenous themselves, expresses curiosity about potential reconciliation efforts in the park project. They wish to see a permanent reflection of Indigeneity within the ward boundaries, allowing for better accessibility to their Indigenous heritage without needing to travel downtown.



## Appendix B – Presentation Images

### Design Option 1: Nature Park

- 1 New entrance at Ryding Ave
- 2 Existing wading pool with new surface treatment, additional seating, and accessible paths
- 3 Seating throughout
- 4 Senior playground
- 5 Junior playground
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### Precedents

#### Seating



Curved Benches

#### Communal Area



Cluster Tables

#### Surfacing



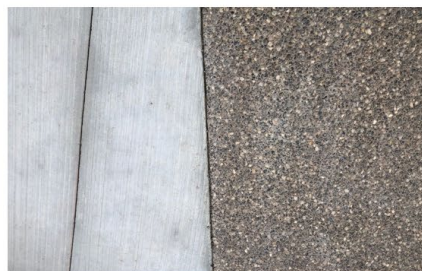
Curvilinear Pathways



Lounge Chairs at Wading Pool

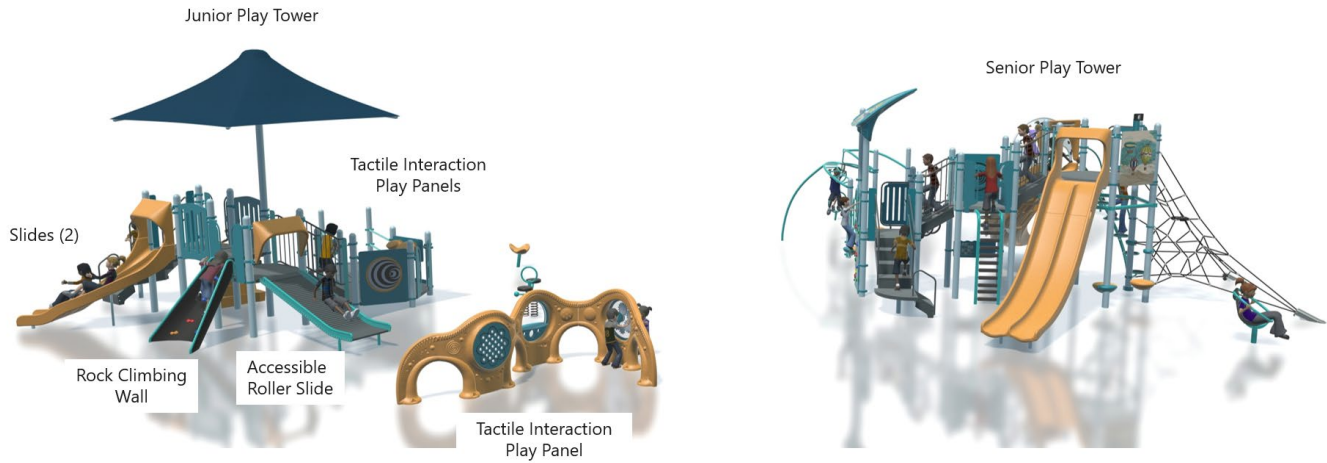


Shade Structure

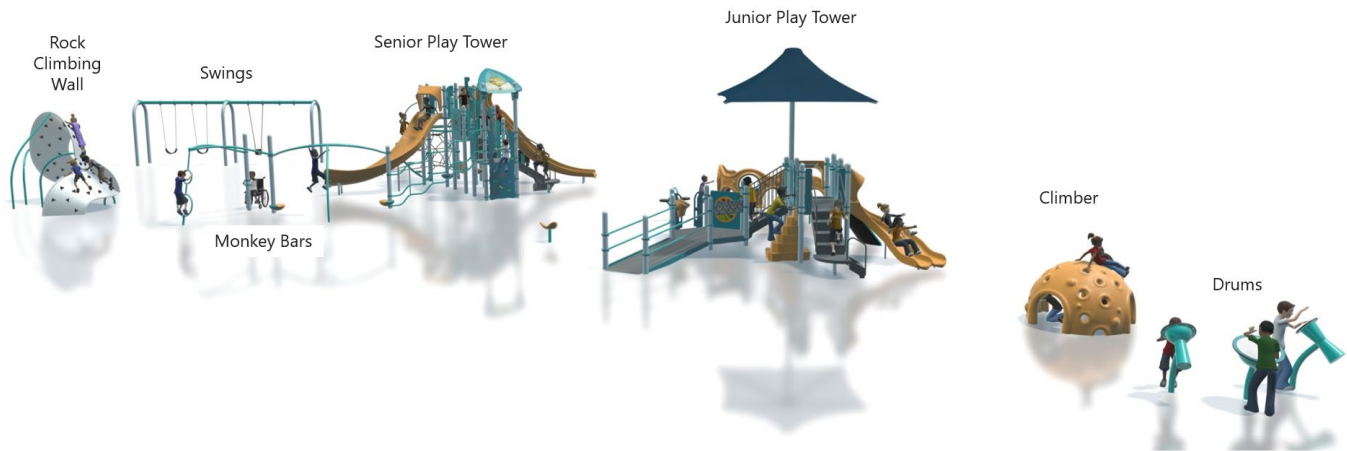


Patterned Paving Treatment

## Nature Park Playground Option A



## Nature Park Playground Option A





## Nature Park Playground Option B



Statement from play equipment supplier, Kompan:  
 "Black Locust wood is more resistant and durable than Oak. The heartwood is very durable in its resistance to wood-destroying fungi and termites.

No issues related to termites for equipment installed in termite infested areas across North America have been reported."

## Nature Park Playground Option B





## Nature Park Playground Option B



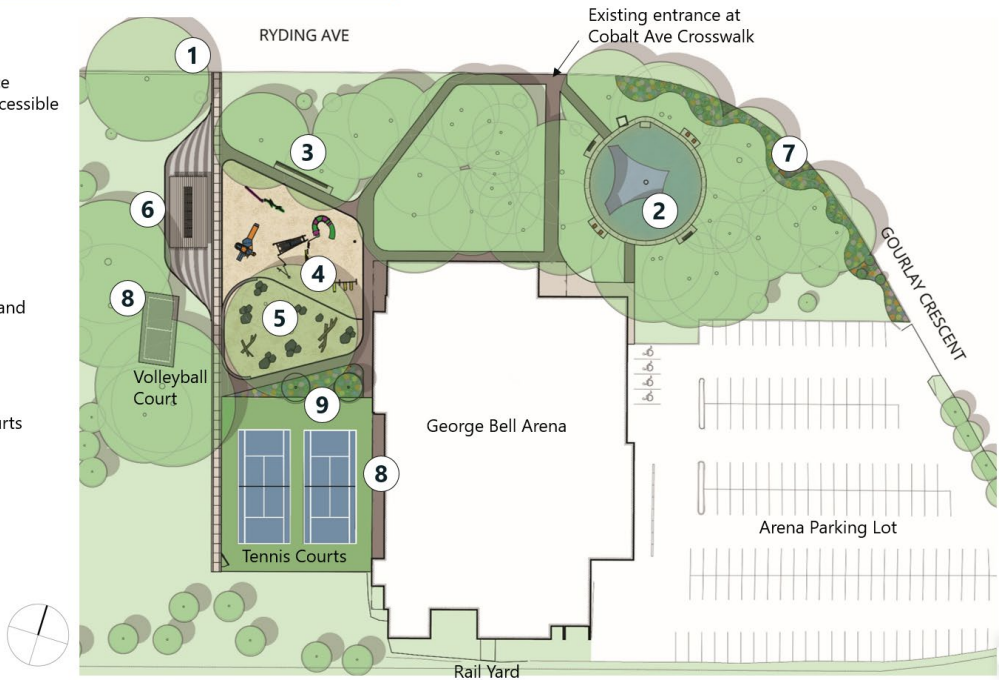
## Nature Park Playground Option B





## Design Option 2: Rail Park

- 1 New Entrance at Ryding Ave
- 2 Existing wading pool with new surface treatment, additional seating, and accessible paths
- 3 Seating throughout
- 4 Senior and Junior playground
- 5 Nature play area with armourstone seatwall
- 6 Gathering area with shade structure and communal picnic tables
- 7 Native planting buffer
- 8 Re-surfaced tennis and volleyball courts
- 9 Pollinator gardens



## Precedents

### Seating



Long Bench Seating

### Communal Gathering



Shade Structure

### Surfacing



'Rail' Themed Treatment to Pathway Paving



Muskoka Style Chairs at Wading Pool



Communal Picnic Tables



Paving Bands



## Rail Park Playground Option A



## Rail Park Playground Option A





## Rail Park Playground Option A



## Rail Park Playground Option A





## Rail Park Playground Option B



## Rail Park Playground Option B





## Rail Park Playground Option B

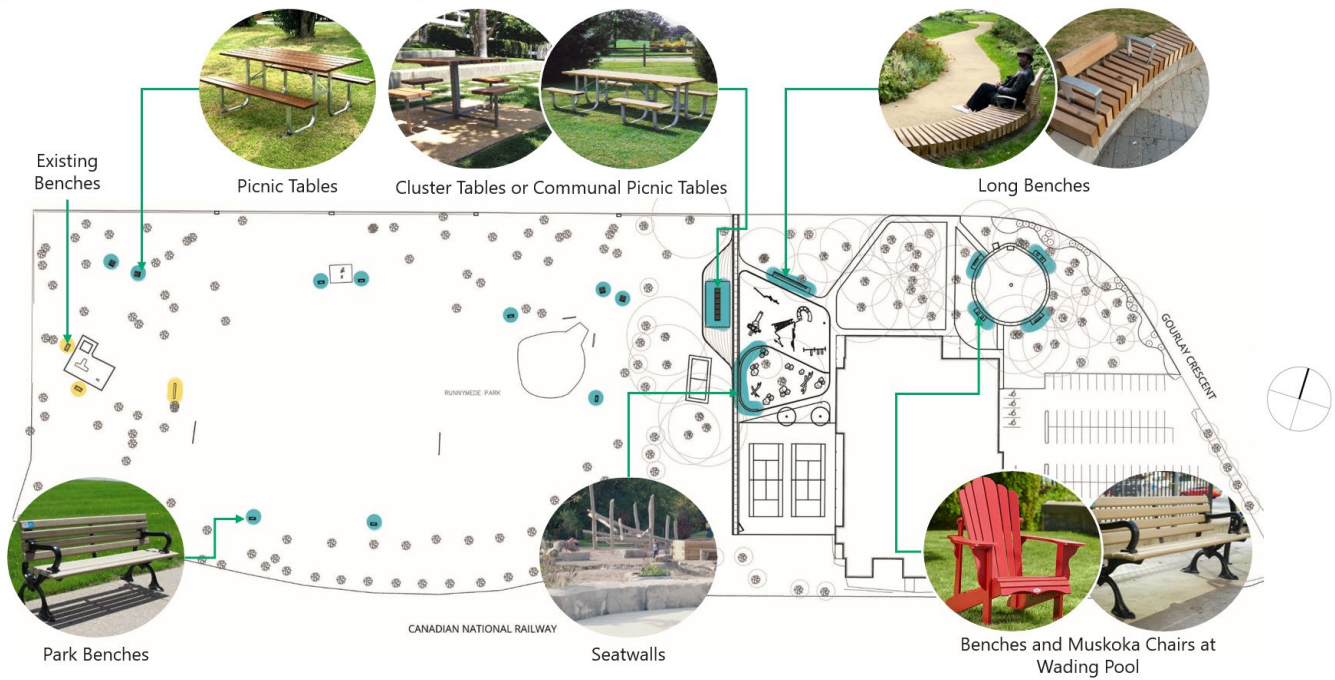


## Rail Park Playground Option B





## Seating Diagram



## Lighting Diagram

- Orange dot indicates existing lamp posts to be updated with new LED lights
- Blue dot indicates relocated lamp posts with new LED light
- Yellow outline represents the 20m light radius from the lamp posts

