

DRAFT FAIRGROUND ACTION PLAN: SUMMARY*

The New Gloucester's Fairgrounds represents a tremendous recreational resource to the Town. This 31-acre parcel is ideally situated along the Royal River reservoir and within walking distance of the town's Upper Village. Since the property was purchased in 2002, a number of improvements have been made, and the facility experiences moderate use during peak periods. But it is still an underutilized resource that is in need of a clear vision and a practical strategy for achieving that vision. The facility has potential to serve as a highly successful, multi-use park that will enhance recreational opportunities, improve public health, provide improved access to the Royal River and support community values.

Vision Statement: *To create a vibrant, multi-use facility that can be enjoyed by both active and passive recreational users for a range of age groups while serving as a venue for community events.*

Fairground Concept Plan



Overarching Principles

1. Promote increased use of the facility.

- Use generates a constituency and support.
- Use promotes more use.
- Use promotes the overall health and well-being of New Gloucester residents.
- Use discourages vandalism and negative behaviors.
- Increased use may eventually provide opportunities for increased revenues to help off-set cost: e.g. field rentals, event user fees.

2. Focus on achievable short- and mid-term improvements, within the context of an overall plan, that have a clear funding strategy. More immediate improvements should be sited in such a way to preserve options for long-term improvements.

3. Promote multiple uses with a balance of both active and passive recreational use, and improvements that support a range of user groups.

4. View the Fairgrounds and potential improvements and activities in the context of how they might improve the overall health and wellbeing of the community, for users of all ages.

5. Consider Fairgrounds planning and implementation in relation to the town's overall recreation and trail use scheme.

6. Program into town budgeting ongoing maintenance of both Fairground facilities and other town recreational facilities.

7. Work with the New Gloucester Water District to ensure that improvements and activities are consistent with protecting the water quality of the public drinking water supply.

Design Principles

Successful park facilities often share key elements, consistent with the principles of good landscape and recreational design. The following specific design principles should be promoted in planning for the Fairground.

- Establish several "focal points" where people can gather and interact.
- Create a gateway area that introduces the facility and welcomes visitors.
- Promote accessibility and linkages throughout the facility. In siting focal point and improvements, carefully consider site flow and coordination between different venues and activities.
- Through signage and the design of other improvements, promote a clear identity or theme for the Fairgrounds. The property's former use for agricultural fairs and racing events provides an excellent opportunity for linking this identity to town history.

*A full copy of the Draft Action plan can be found on the Town website, Planning Department Page.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Immediate Actions for Waterfront area: Scheduled for Spring 2016

- Kayak/Canoe Station
- Carry-In Boat Launch Improvements
- Waterfront Kiosk

- Picnic table and bench
- Parking area for waterfront users
- Directional Signage

Funding Strategy: Two Canoes and Kayaks already donated by LL Bean. Most other costs covered by Royal River Conservation Trust funds – supported by Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, with in-kind labor provided by Town.

Immediate Actions for Fairgrounds Upland Areas, 2015-2016

- Maintenance Shed (Already Completed)
- Landscaping/Pollinator's Garden (In progress)
- Initial Trail Improvements

- Field Repair/Enhancement
- Beach Volleyball Court

Funding Strategy: Existing operating budgets and volunteer/donations.

Short-Term Improvements: 2016-2018

- Pavilion/Family Gathering Area
- Playground
- Entry Kiosk
- Parking Improvements

- "Field A" Enhancements (aeration, reseeding, fertilization and regular watering)
- Picnic Tables/Benches
- Additional Landscaping
- Improved Signage

Funding Strategy: Land and Water Conservation Grant, CIP funds already set aside and in-kind donations.

Mid-Term Improvements (2018-2020)

- Make significant improvements to the Field "B" area (the middle 1/3 of the infield) for use for organized sports activities, including an irrigation system.

- Additional Trail Enhancements
- Entry gateway building
- Waterfront docking structure
- Expanded cookout area near pavilion

Funding Strategy: Annual CIP set asides, in-kind donation of material/labor, Recreational Trail Program grants and other fundraising efforts/grants, user fees.

Longer-Term Improvements

There are a number of longer-term improvements that would enhance the use of the Fairgrounds. At the current time, resources are not available to fund these options. But with growing use and support for the facility in the future, the following items should be considered:

- Natural amphitheater for outdoor performances (in area sloping down to waterfront),
- Second pavilion and additional amenities in this area.
- Additional field improvements and playground apparatus.

Cost and Funding Strategy

- Use a diversified funding approach that taps into available grant funding and other resources. Use these monies to leverage other funds and resources, as well as vigorously pursue opportunities for donation and in-kind matching.
- Seek immediate assistance from the Land & Water Conservation Fund to jumpstart the implementation of this plan.
- With this Action Plan in place, seek voter approval for release of capital reserve funds already designated for recreational improvements.
- Continue to set aside money in the Parks and Recreation budget both for improvements and ongoing maintenance.
- In the longer run, seek additional revenue streams, e.g. user fees for organized events and activities.