

Former Salmon River Elementary School Property



Public Engagement Update
June 2022

Property Background

The former Salmon River Elementary School property was acquired by the County after the school closed in 2008 and request for proposals was conducted in 2009 with none received. The property was leased to RCMP for training in 2012 and retained for potential future use by the Municipality. The school was demolished in 2017 and has been vacant for several years with some local recreational use. In 2021, the Municipality began to do some light maintenance of the property.

Property Background

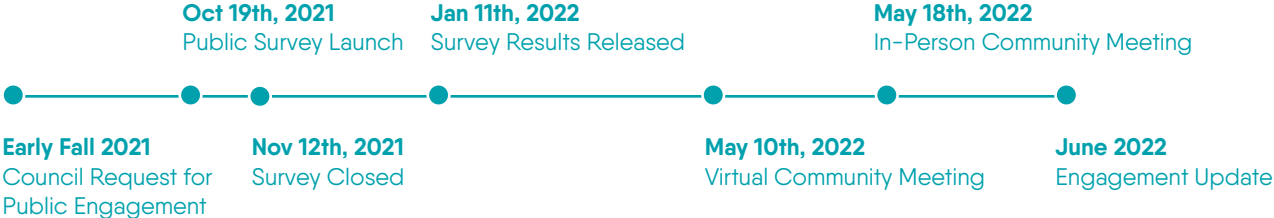
- Property Size: 16.43 Acres
- Highest Elevation: 52 metres
- Lowest Elevation: 29 metres

- Property assets:
- Sewer service
 - Freshwater brook
 - Open field
 - Road access
 - Garbage and recycling bins
 - Forested sections
 - Hill for tobogganing



Figure 1: Map of property

Engagement Process Timeline



Engagement Process

Staff Team

In Fall 2021 a group of municipal staff members was established to facilitate the engagement process of the former school property. This team includes three planners, two recreation staff members, and the Municipality's engagement coordinator.

Survey

In October 2021 a community survey was conducted to gauge Salmon River residents thoughts on the future of this property. The survey launched October 19th, 2021 and closed November 12th, staying active for 25 days. The survey was available online (Colchester.ca) and in print format by direct mail (upon request) or available for pick up at the Municipal Office (1 Church St.). It could also be completed with County staff over the phone or in person.

The residents were made aware of the survey through a geo-targeted direct-mail campaign involving post cards delivered to 1,470 homes in the greater Salmon River area. It was later learned that households who opt not to receive promotional mail, did not receive the post card. Advertisement was also conducted through the Municipality's website (Colchester.ca), and promoted through social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and an advertisement in Truro News and the Colchester Wire.

193 surveys were completed. This survey worked to understand the current uses of this property and what type of future uses residents would like to see. Based on these survey results, staff created three potential design concepts for the property.

Virtual Engagement Session

On Tuesday May 10th, the Municipality hosted a virtual engagement session via zoom. Residents were made aware of the community meetings with a geo-targeted direct-mail campaign involving postcards delivered to 2197 household in the greater Salmon River area. This time the Municipality was able to override Canada Post's exclusion of those who opt not to receive promotional mail. All households therefore received the post card and were made aware of the meetings.

This session was led by our team of staff. We shared a presentation which outlined a brief overview of the property, key survey results, and the three design concepts. Attendees were given the opportunity to share their thoughts through a facilitated discussion. Additionally, at the end of the meeting, a link to an online form was emailed to all attendees where they could share additional thoughts or if they chose to not speak at the session. 10 people attended this session and 25 people responded to the online form.

In-Person Engagement Session

On Wednesday May 18th, staff held an in person engagement session at Harmony Heights Elementary School. 39 community members attended, including Mayor Blair, Deputy Mayor Stewart and Councillor Johnson. This session presented the same presentation from the

previous virtual meeting. Attendees were given the opportunity to share their thoughts through discussion with the group, filling out a hand out, participating in a sticky note activity with the design concepts, and also could speak with staff directly.

Results

Survey Findings

Full survey report found in attached document

- 35% of respondents visit the property at least once a month and 62% either rarely or never use it.
- The top three uses for the property currently is walking, letting your dog run, and winter activities.
- If housing were considered for this property, residents were most interested in traditional single family homes, multi-unit (townhouses), and/or small affordable housing/cluster housing.
- The top five park features residents are interested in for this property are walking trails/paths, playground, benches/picnic tables, sledding hill, and parking.
- 39% of respondents were interested in a mix of park space and housing and 39% were not. 22% were not sure or did not respond.

Concepts Developed for Community Meeting

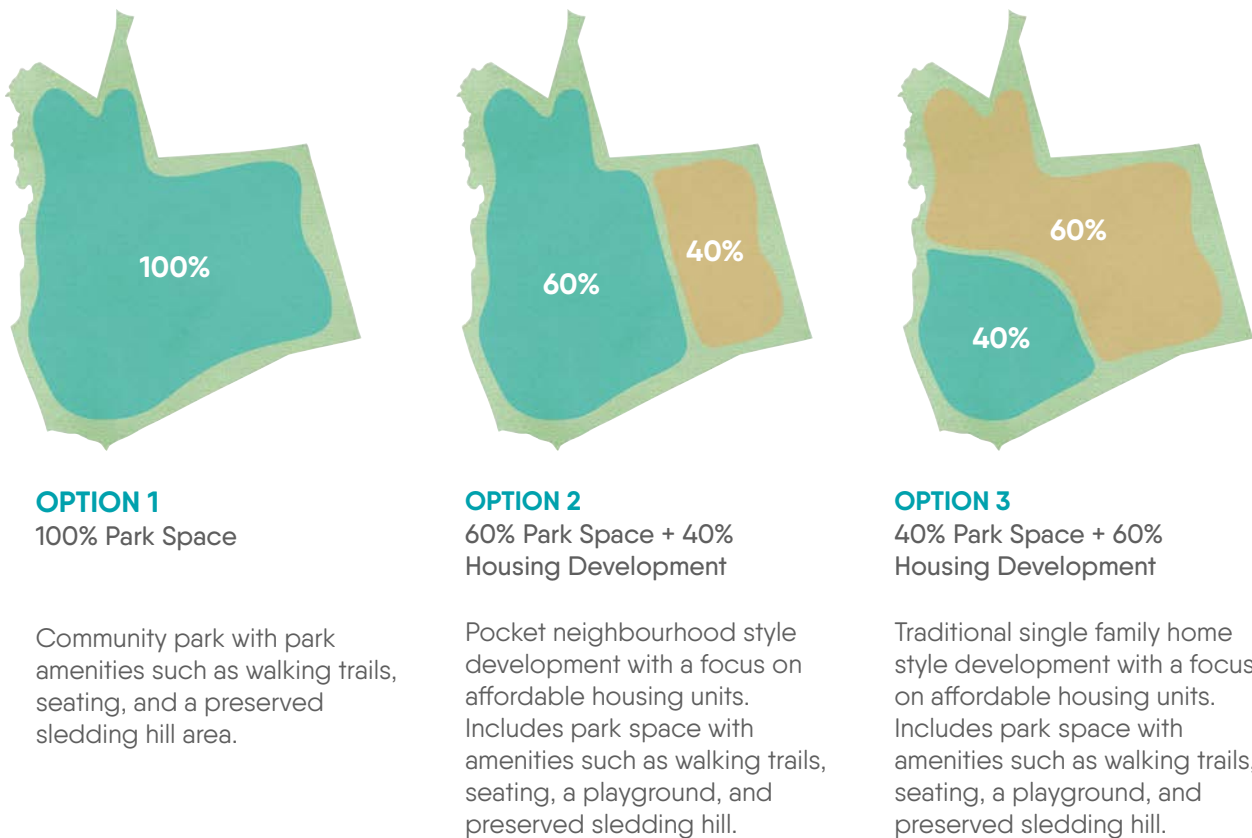
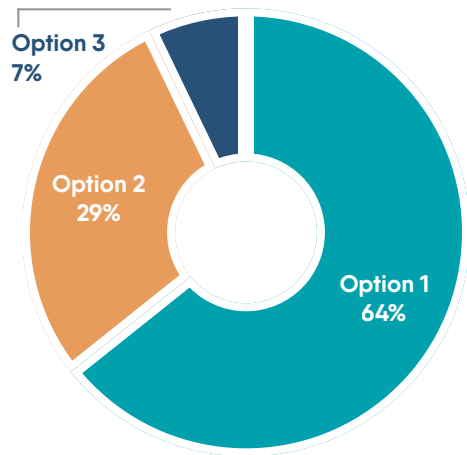


Figure 2: Three design concepts

Virtual Engagement Session

Attendees interest in each design concept
Responses: 25



In Person Engagement Session

Attendees interest in each design concept
Responses: 10

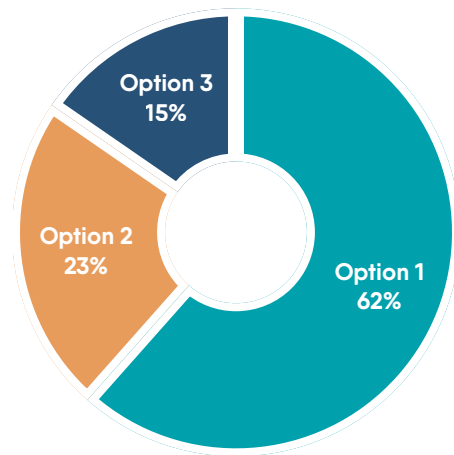


Figure 3: Attendees interest in 3 design concepts

3 Design Concepts

Detailed designs found in attached document

Staff used the survey results to develop three potential design concepts for the property. The three concepts covered the communities desire for park space, and potential housing development. Participants expressed the most interest in park space which is why each concept incorporates a community park with varying sizes.

Community Meeting Results

Detailed chart of all attendee responses found in attached document

Attendees were given the opportunity to comment on each design option. Municipal staff took these responses and compiled them to analyze. Through the process of coding this data, staff highlighted some of the key points for and against potential uses of this site. Figure 3 highlights attendees expressed interest in each concept in both the virtual and in person sessions.

Figure 4 summaries the main opinions which have been brought up in this engagement process on the future land use of this property. The chart highlights opinions for and against park space and for and against housing. Overall staff concluded there is a significant amount of interest in establishing at least a portion of this property as a community park, whether that includes a housing development or not.

Reasons For 100% Park Space	Reasons Against 100% Park Space	Reasons For Housing Development with Park Space	Reasons For Against Development with Park Space
Supports recreation and outdoor activities	Safety concerns: vandalism, not policed, unleashed dogs, ATVs damaging land and the brook	Opportunity for seniors housing	There are other places in the County for housing
Benefits more than just those who can afford to buy a house	Only a small amount of people use it as a park	Mixed age and mixed income housing opportunity	Housing would be disruptive
The property is great for sledding, walking and exploring		Some areas on the property are not used every day for recreation purposes and could be used for housing	Any park space left on the property would feel like it belongs to the new residents of a housing development
Preserves the natural space		There is a need for housing	The area is safe enough to have a park without housing around
More green spaces is needed in Salmon River		Opportunity for larger tax base in Salmon River	It would take away too much of the green space and trees

Figure 4: table of key findings from engagement process