

RAINBOW PARK REJUVENATION – DESIGN NARRATIVE

This document provides details regarding the rationale, objectives and specific key changes for redesigned Rainbow Park.

Climate Change Adaptation and Environment

Parks can help mitigate and adapt to climate change by more deeply considering how we plan, design, and maintain green spaces. Climate responsible design can challenge expectations about park aesthetics, how the public uses and engages with a park, and municipal maintenance practices.

Redesign objectives:

- Improve existing ecological conditions, support biodiversity and reduce habitat fragmentation
- Protect the Park from annual spring flood inundation, and yet absorb extreme flood events
- Impede geese access to the lawn from the beach and air
- Improve microclimatic conditions for visitors
- Reduce irrigation, potable water and lawn maintenance needs

Key changes:

- The amount of riparian vegetation adjacent to Rainbow Creek will be increased and underutilized lawn areas will be re-naturalized, reducing irrigation and lawn mowing needs
- Pollinator shrub species will be added where appropriate
- The elevation of the lawn relative to the lake will be raised slightly to protect against typical spring flooding while still being able to absorb extreme flood events
- Trees and shrubs will be introduced to impede geese beach and lawn landings
- Trees and a seasonal shade structure will be added to provide additional shade opportunities
- The water source for the Park's irrigation system will be converted to a primarily non-potable well water source

Accessibility

Universal access to all park elements enables people with mobility limitations, health conditions, or other challenges to have safe and equitable park experiences. Good universal design solutions are embedded within park elements and may not be obvious as they serve all users.

An objective of the Rainbow Park redesign is to provide equitable park, beach, dock, lake and amenity access for everyone.

Key changes:

- The number of accessible vehicle parking stalls has been increased and egress in the parking area improved
- A hard surface pathway to the beach and onto all docks will be installed
- Dock-mounted water entry chair lifts will be added

- Accessible beach mats will be provided to the lake edge
- Accessible picnic tables, paired wheelchair/site seating opportunities, outdoor showers and hammocks will be provided throughout the park

Circulation and Valley Trail Realignment

Circulation routes are the main spatial organizational element in park design, and are the basis for a visitor's first impressions. Design techniques can be applied to achieve desired outcomes related to safety, experience, dispersion and maintenance efficiencies.

Redesign objectives:

- Improve the park arrival and engagement experience
- Improve safety with respect to the Valley Trail for all Park users
- Encourage users to reduce speed along the Valley Trail
- Encourage visitors to explore more areas of the Park
- Address a Valley Trail trespass situation
- Provide a structurally sound loop for summer park servicing and winter Nordic snow grooming efficiencies
- Improve overall site wayfinding and legibility

Key changes:

- A Valley Trail connection between Alta Lake Road and the Park has been added
- The alignment of the Valley Trail arriving from Lorimer Road will be changed from a linear to curving to slow movement and encourage appreciation of the space upon arrival, rather than simply bypassing it
- The new alignment will move the Valley Trail out of the railway right of way
- The width of the Valley Trail will be increased to 4.0 metres to accommodate a higher number and broader range of users. The same approach was used for the Valley Trail segment between Day Lot 3 and the Village skate and bike skills parks and achieved a satisfactory result.
- Valley Trail crossing points within the Park will be strategically located and reinforced with pavement cues, signs, topography and low vegetation
- Hard surface pathways will be provide access where it does not currently exist, encourage exploration and double as efficient service vehicle and Nordic skiing snow grooming routes.

Gathering Places

Adding new places for people to gather, or expanding previous spaces, will help disperse people throughout the park and ensuring more people can use the space. The Park will accommodate various activities and the design will ensure multiple uses occur simultaneously without conflict.

Redesign objectives:

- Disperse people throughout the Park
- Increase the Park's ability to accommodate increasing visitation
- Provide new and unique experiences
- Leverage existing experiences

Key changes:

- The beach will be expanded and improved as a “place to be”
- A food truck plaza will be added and incorporated with the bike valet and bike share services
- A hammock grove and additional picnicking opportunities will be provided
- A seasonal shade structure will be provided over a new picnic zone
- Another dock with a unique cargo net over water experience will be added and an existing dock made accessible
- The volleyball area is relocated and made more of a distinctive place with improved ball control with places to sit and watch

Beach Expansion and Improvement

While beaches represent a transition between land and water they can become their own distinct “place” and reinforce the larger sense of place. With thoughtful design the beach area can also address more functional park needs.

Redesign objectives:

- The beach becomes a distinctive place of its own
- The beach is accessible and offers play and social opportunities for all users
- Geese and seasonal flood management strategies are incorporated into the beach zone
- Improve the naturalized park/beach interface

Key changes:

- The beach area will be expanded west into the current lawn and the sand upgraded
- A paved pathway to the beach edge and accessible mats across the sand will be provided
- The interface between beach and park will be blurred with logs, low seat walls and naturalized plantings
- Plants will be added for visual appeal, habitat enhancement and to act as a natural geese deterrent

Main Lawn Area

The main lawn area is a key element to Rainbow Park serving as the Park’s primary gathering and viewing space. Typically, users of a large open space first gravitate to the edges of the space to people watch and enjoy the area from the sides of an enclosure. Opportunities exist to build on this behavior and improve experiences.

Redesign objectives:

- The central lawn remains the primary social and gathering space
- Retain and enhance views of Alta Lake
- Provide additional gathering places around the perimeter of the lawn
- Offer shaded gathering places
- Discourage geese access
- Improve drainage

Key changes:

- Trees will be added around the perimeter to provide shade and gathering spaces, discourage geese landings, and further define the space
- A grove of seasonal hammocks will be provided for more lounging
- The lawn will be slightly sloped to take in the view and improve drainage

Additional and Improved Docks

Docks are a fun feature offering creativity and water interaction. They also serve to increase the overall size of the Park with their ability to accommodate many visitors.

Redesign objectives:

- Improve access to the existing two docks
- Add more dock space
- Provide unique water interface experiences

Key changes:

- The north dock installed in 2021 will be made accessible with provision of a hard surface pathway
- A new large south dock will be added and include a permanent accessible ramp at the water-beach edge as well as a cargo-net hammock over the water
- An accessible water entry chair lift will be provided at both docks

Outdoor (Beach) Volleyball

Beach volleyball remains a popular park element and helps to energize the Park's atmosphere.

Redesign objectives:

- Retain four beach volleyball courts within the Park, but consider relocation to achieve overall objectives and make best use of limited park space
- Improve ball control measures
- Create a more definitive sense of place for the courts

Key changes:

- The four courts will be relocated to allow for efficient use of overall park space and to allow for a curving Valley Trail arrival, thus achieving other Park redesign objectives.
- The volleyball area will be in its own dedicated zone defined by a tree lined oval with added social and viewing opportunities.
- The edges of the court space are reinforced with plantings and a ball control fence
- Logical and dedicated Valley Trail crossing points to the main lawn and beach are introduced and reinforced with low plantings and topography

Drainage and Irrigation Improvements

Good drainage is essential to park design, and can add interest to a space.

Redesign objectives:

- Address the lawn's poor drainage so it can be useable earlier and later in the season and following intense rain events.

- Use natural drainage systems wherever possible
- Seek opportunities where drainage elements can add to the character of the Park
- Reduce or eliminate use of potable water for irrigation

Key changes:

- The main lawn area will be constructed on a sand base and be slightly raised and sloped
- A seasonal drainage channel will be introduced
- The amount of area requiring irrigation will be reduced
- Where appropriate irrigated areas will use a higher efficiency drip irrigation system
- The irrigation supply will be changed to use primarily non-potable water

Dog Off-leash Area, Special Events Area and the Heritage Cabins

At this time, improvements are not being considered for these areas other than irrigation upgrades as necessitated by the larger park rejuvenation project.