

Royal River Park Improvement Project

Questions and Answers – as of 3.13.2021

What is the impetus behind the project?

Yarmouth Community Services has been proactively planning and budgeting for the much-needed rehabilitation of four of the Town's aging tennis courts. These courts were originally partially funded by a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which now makes them eligible for rehabilitation under that same fund. The Royal River Park and pathway were also partially funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund and are similarly eligible for funding for rehabilitation. Part of the pathway has aged and is at the end of its lifespan leading to potential safety concerns for bikers and pedestrians. Upgrades to the tennis courts and pathway are essential maintenance costs, which will arise soon as a burden on the municipal budget. Funding for these two costs has already been partially funded by the Town Council through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget.

The advantage of applying for a Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant is that it could allow the Town to receive a matching amount of money to leverage the monies already budgeted and those soon to be budgeted for rehabilitation of aging parks and open space infrastructure. If a grant application is accepted and approved, it would effectively allow the Town to double the value of any money spent on the project and at the same time fund other benefits towards park aesthetics and general functionality.

How much will this cost?

Preliminary estimates of the project are between \$500,000 and \$600,000. That cost could go up or down based on changes to the project scope that result from the public process. The initial design was intentionally broad to gather as much input as possible. After the initial input is received the landscape architect will focus on specific design elements. Half of the project is anticipated to come from local funds and half would come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.

How will this affect allowed uses and park rules?

There are no changes to park rules planned in conjunction with this project. Part of the impetus for the project is to accommodate the current multiple uses of the park more safely and harmoniously.

Will the project require temporary closures?

Temporary closures will be required in certain areas of the park during construction. The larger park would remain open to the public during construction.

How many parking spaces are you looking to add and will there be additional handicap parking available?

The proximity to the Royal River at the main parking area at East Elm Street restricts the potential for expansion at that location. The existing parking lot is undersized for the three rows of parking it currently accommodates. To expand the parking lot to accommodate additional parking spots would require a significant expansion of the lot. An alternative location was looked at, which would extend the driveway into a new parking lot on the current lawn area and out of the shoreland zone. The encroachment to the park by this alternative was too significant to be viable and the driveway necessary to reach the lot would have added almost as much impervious area in the shoreland zone as expansion of the current lot. The handicap parking area was expanded and improved in recent years and any further expansion to handicap parking would face the same constraints as other parking expansion.

Would the new designated picnic area have shade provided by a pavilion of some sort or would that pavilion be going away all together?

The new picnic area is in the concept stage only, if public opinion supports this change the landscape architect will begin work on the details of the design. The current concept is to repurpose the old brick stage as an alternative picnic area, the current covered picnic area would remain as a shaded option.

Would improvements to the overlook site include upgrades to the fencing, additional seating or other amenities?

The current railing at the overlook area has been identified as a possible safety concern and any upgrade would include improvements to the safety and aesthetics of the overlook, especially for small children.

Through the design process, increased seating opportunities or other ways to allow spacing and enjoyment of the river's views were identified as important at this location.

Public art, be it installed musical pieces, sculpture, or other form, may highlight the area at this location or other spaces within the parcel.

Will families be able to “buy” a bench, either as a donation or in memory of a loved one?

We have such a great response from families who are looking to place a bench in memory of a loved one. Royal River Park will be a great location for continuance of that tradition. It is our thinking the village-style benches be placed along the pathway and opportunities for other benches be incorporated into the unique areas of the park spaces. We will continue to work with landscape architects to help place benches and amenities (like picnic tables, sculptures, or other features) throughout the park without detracting from the aesthetics and the history of the park.

My family and I just love the view up the river from the turn in the path where the “old rope swing” used to be. That space would be a great resting place for users. Would you consider placing a bench there, even though it is out of the scope?

Thank you for this suggestion. That spot is a great location for a resting place and it sure serves to be a cool, in temperature, place to pause in the warm months. We are open to this type of addition to the park as part of this plan.

Have you considered plumbed restrooms?

Plumbed restrooms were considered as an option. Current maintenance staffing does not allow for proper sanitation and upkeep of a developed facility that would require multiple cleanings a day during the busy season. The current portable toilets are considered sufficient for current park uses.

Would the performance area be getting a larger stage or just a shift in location?

The possibility for a new performance area is in the concept stage. If public opinion supports this change the landscape architect would begin work on the details of the new layout to accommodate changing park uses.

How much wider is the trail going to be? Will it allow bike riders and wheelchairs to pass without issues?

The new width of the path will ultimately be resolved during the environmental permitting process. The current paved path width is five feet, but the shoulders of the path have several additional feet of impervious surface. The goal is to keep a similar amount of impervious surface to what currently exists and to pave and level the current extent of that impervious surface. This would likely result in a path that is 7-8 feet in width and/or various “pull-offs,” allowing for passing of bikers, mobility devices, strollers, walkers and runners.

Did you consider the impacts of the potential dam removal or other fish passage improvements in the project design?

This project is independent of the Royal River restoration project, but the various alternatives for the restoration should not impact the path or park infrastructure in the areas covered under this project.

Do you expect the paved pathway to remain in the same locations throughout?

The paved pathway will be largely located in the existing footprint of the current pathway, but there are a few places where relocations are being considered and are included in the concept diagram.

The first location considered for relocation is at the entrance near the maintenance building. This relocation would allow for a more natural flow of visitors both from the parking lot and from the pathway from East Elm Street. It would allow for a safer and more pleasing visitor experience by moving the path away from the maintenance building, which in the summer sees frequent traffic from trucks and maintenance equipment.

The second location considered for relocation is past the overlook at the cistern gardens. The bridge at that location has been inspected by a structural engineer and determined to need replacement in the near future. The cost of the bridge replacement is roughly double the cost of rerouting the trail around the cisterns. The alternate route has the additional benefits to try to meet Universally Accessible standards for the pathway, while also better highlighting the historic and natural features in that section.

What is the timeframe for completion? What is the expected duration of the project from start to finish?

The grant application is due at the end of May 2021, award and notification is estimated by late Fall 2021, and the project would likely take place during the “construction season” in the summer of 2022 and be completed by the Fall. If awarded a grant, additional public meetings about this project will be held between the Fall 2021 notification and beginning of construction.

If lighting is enhanced, will the park hours be extended?

There is no plan to extend park hours. Currently the park is open from one hour before sunrise until 11pm. Enhanced lighting would allow for safer use during the hours when the park is currently open. Through this process, we heard feedback requesting lighting to be a closely looked at addition (environmental impacts, vandalism opportunities, etc.).

Have you considered additional traffic control of any kind to reduce conflicts between multiple uses on the pathway?

The hope is that the wider pathway will reduce user conflicts by allowing more space for passing. Conflict issues will be addressed as they arise through outreach, planning, and education.

Is this consistent with other Town planning documents, such as the 2009 Royal River Corridor Master Plan and the 2019 Open Space Plan?

Yes, this project is consistent with other past planning efforts. The Royal River Corridor Master Plan contained many recommendations, some of the relevant ones for this project include:

- Improve gateways into the river corridor with proper attention to view corridors, landscape detailing, signage, and lighting.

- Open view corridors along the river in appropriate locations in keeping with current Shoreland Zone standards, while minimizing wildlife impacts and erosion. Control Invasive Species. Establish a program to replace invasive species within the river corridor, especially within the Royal River Park, with native species with significant wildlife value.
- Install a more formal overlook at the falls to accentuate its position as a focal point in the park. Design elements should consider a paved surface at the overlook; stone walls to define the edge of the space; interpretive signage to tell the story of the paper company; and low-maintenance landscaping.
- Remove vegetation from the face and top of {the remaining mill) walls to give them greater visibility to park users.
- Add low-maintenance perennials throughout the park to add seasonal color.

The 2019 Open Space Plan was broader in scope, but also contains recommendations relevant to this project:

- Increase attention to maintenance and amenities, especially for open space in the Village and neighborhood properties, to highlight the best of Yarmouth's values and character.
- Initiate a vegetation management program, which includes removing invasive plant species, additional plantings of native species, and adding visual interest to Royal River Park and the corridor.
- Maintain, enhance, and create new trails and paths to improve access to Main Street and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Coordinate the design of benches, lighting, signage, and other improvements for a common aesthetic for development both within and surrounding the corridor.
- Participate in research to acquire local, regional, state, or federal financial opportunities to help fund enhancements and maintenance projects within our Town-owned lands.

Would there be consideration for a Pump Track amenity added in this park, possibly nearest the railroad tracks where there is currently overgrown vegetation and hidden ruins? The area is currently a protected place for flagrant activities and would benefit the property to clean it up while providing a space for all ages.

Yes, this project will consider various suggestions by residents. We agree, a pump track would be an amenity that fits best within the downtown locations, and not be placed in other distant spaces. Our town has seen an uptick of interest in pump track-type of activity in town and we would agree a space in the village would be an ideal location for all to use.

Please consider adding additional Interpretive Signage.

We will consider additional Interpretive Signage and have received many suggestions and opportunities for partnerships to continue highlighting the history of this area, the natural environment, and the Indigenous people who once inhabited this part of the Royal River.

Concerns were heard about lighting the pathway and the potential for habitats to be impacted.

YCS will work to find the best possible solution as we move through the development phases of the Royal River Park Improvements. Various spectrums of light may be considered as a better approach to providing safety along the path. Timers and settings for the lights are another way to balance the concerns for the pathway's safety and the environment.

Yarmouth Arts Alliance is interested in working to install public art in the RR Park. Would this be an option?

As a municipal project, we are collecting input from organizations, individuals, and staff to help make this Park safer and a great reflection of our community. The following basic needs YCS feels are important: the replacement of the tennis courts, improvements to the surfacing of the pathway, improvements in drainage, replacement of the cisterns' bridge or a rerouting of the path, a safer parking lot, invasive plant management, and improvements made to the connections to Main Street and the Village.