

5.0 GREENING CENTREOWN

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5.0 Greening Centretown

In most urban neighbourhoods the presence of parks and the quality of its public realm with planting and street trees contributes strongly to creating an impression of the neighbourhood as a green and livable community. Green spaces and a healthy urban forest help to soften the hard character of city spaces, add beauty to urban settings, and improve environmental quality.

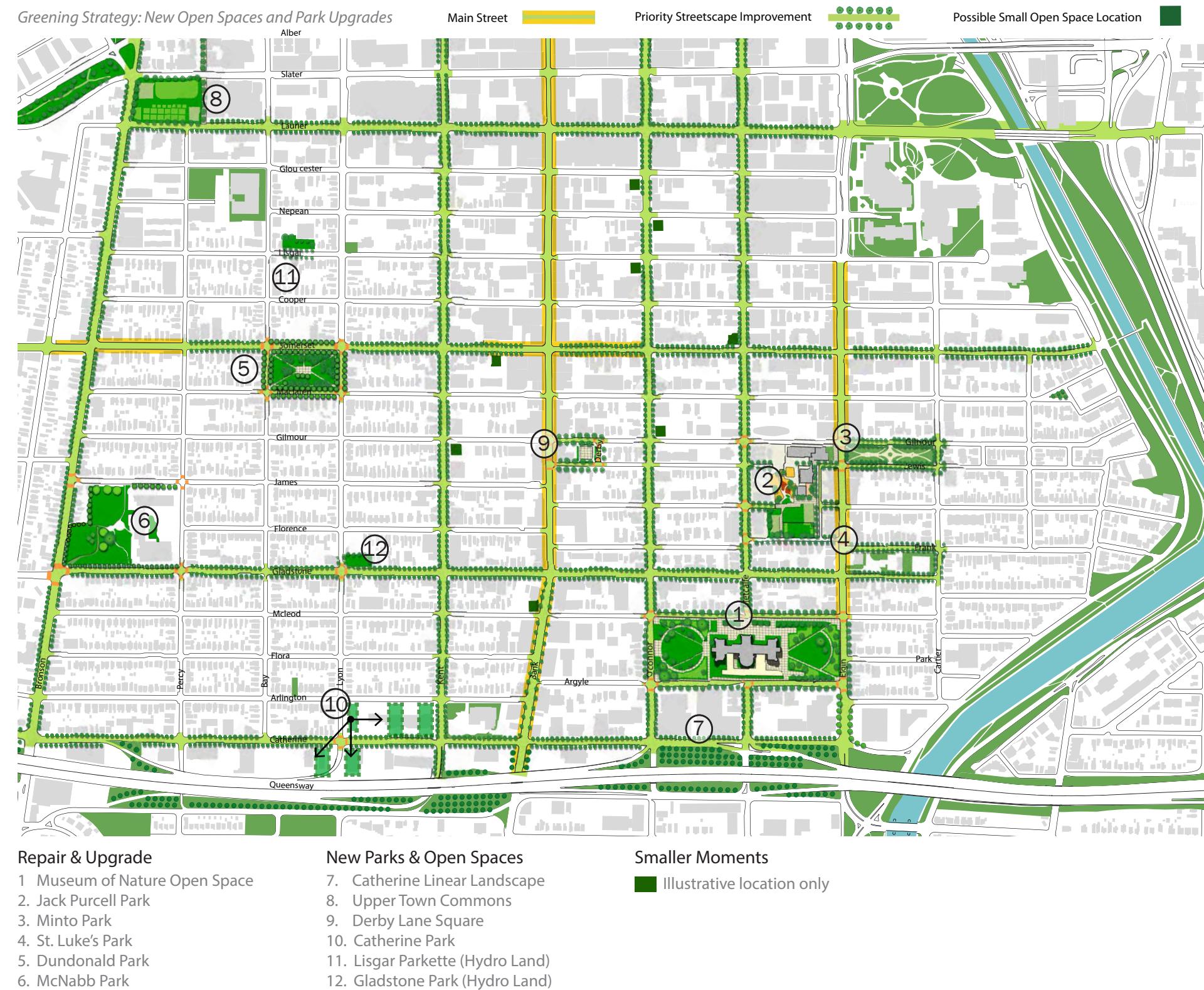
Parks and open spaces are essential neighbourhood amenities that support a diversity of formal and informal recreational uses. However, not only are parks important for beauty, image and activity, but they are also important for helping to attract new investment, adding value to existing buildings and bringing visitors and new residents to an area.

Centretown enjoys some of Ottawa's best access to the impressive system of regional parks, trails and waterways. However, these assets are owned and maintained by the Federal Government. More locally, and further afield from the banks of the Rideau Canal, there is a deficiency of smaller and more usable and flexible urban open spaces to serve the Centretown community. To address this issue, the CDP identifies several opportunities to create new park space as part of redevelopment opportunities. New green spaces include a mix of larger community park spaces (one-quarter of an acre and larger) as well as smaller open space moments, in the form of plazas, forecourts and terraces (less than one-quarter of an acre).

As presented to the right, the strategy for Greening Centretown consists of four approaches:

1. Existing Assets: Repair and upgrade existing parks and open spaces
2. New Community Parks: Augment existing park provision with introduction of one or two additional community park spaces
3. Smaller Moments: Introduce a series of smaller open spaces across Centretown, integrated with new residential and/or commercial developments
4. Green Connection: Along those streets that connect parks, ensure pedestrian routes are well planted and landscaped.

The approach does not involve the expropriation of large parcels of land or the demolition of existing structures to accommodate new park spaces.



Approach to Greening Centretown

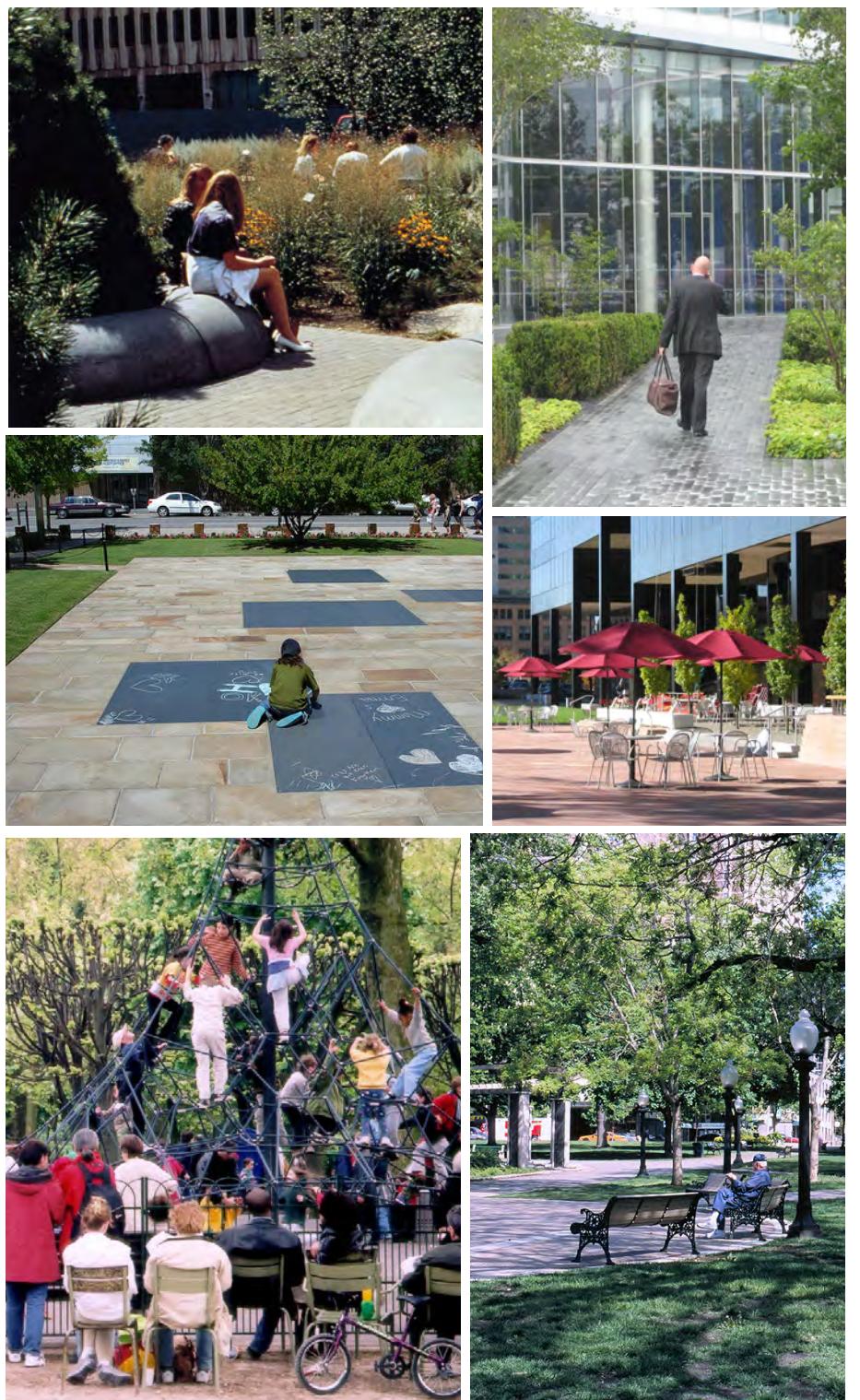
In urban neighbourhoods such as Centretown, securing access to adequate green spaces is essential for creating a livable community. Any further intensification in Centretown needs to be supported by a series of public realm improvements, including the provision of new parks and an upgrade to existing spaces. Building on recommendations presented in DOUDS as well as in the Centretown Secondary Plan, the City should pursue the following in an effort to re-green Centretown:

- Upgrade existing open spaces serving Centretown, with Jack Purcell Park as the priority.
- Undertake a well-planned and comprehensive programme of open space acquisition across Centretown. To ensure that opportunities are identified, suggested actions are to:
 - > Locate new open spaces on corners, on through lots and/or along mainstreets, where possible.
 - > Work with developers to encourage the inclusion of a usable open space on sites brought forward for redevelopment. These can be hard or soft landscaped.
 - > Use existing vacant lots in the downtown area as temporary park spaces.
 - > Work with private sector partners to provide publicly accessible open spaces as part of new developments. These open spaces should be located at grade and could be above underground parking or as part of internal courtyards. The City could enter into lease agreements with developers to share costs and ensure public access.
- Plant street trees along Centretown streets, with Metcalfe, Gladstone, Catherine, and Somerset as a priority to create a more connected green system.
- Ensure that new park spaces are of a high design quality and that their form being appropriate for their function is more important than the size of the green space.

Centretown parks and open spaces need to be safe and inviting for all users - residents and visitors alike. The landscape design should be of the highest quality, attractive and durable for all seasons. The following should be considered when designing any new park or open space in Centretown:

- Showcase the best of the neighbourhood across each of Centretown's existing parks. Each park should complement one another in function, as opposed to duplicating roles.
- Ensure park design is adaptable for all four seasons. In major park spaces, design for winter uses with wind screens, durable landscaping and conifer planting.
- Consider sun exposure when selecting a suitable location for any new open space location.
- Due to the scarcity of available open space and the demands placed on park spaces, any new or upgraded parks must demonstrate excellence in design and sustainable practice. This includes:
 - > using durable, weather resistant materials;
 - > integrating water infiltration/evaporation zones;
 - > including seating, lighting, and garbage receptacles as part of a coordinated design;
 - > using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED);
 - > reviewing the feasibility of introducing public art to one or more of Centretown's parks;
 - > using drought-resistant, non-invasive planting species to ensure longevity and durability and eliminate need for irrigation systems; and
 - > creating barrier-free (physical and visual) edges of parks. Visual connection toward the internal areas of the park should always be maintained from outside perspectives.

A variety of open space opportunities



5.1 Park Repair & Upgrade

As identified earlier, there is an under-provision of usable community parks within Centretown to serve the needs of its current and future residents. At present, Minto Park, St. Luke's Park and Jack Purcell Park are the largest City parks in the Core Study Area, while McNabb and Dundonald Parks service the western portions of Centretown.

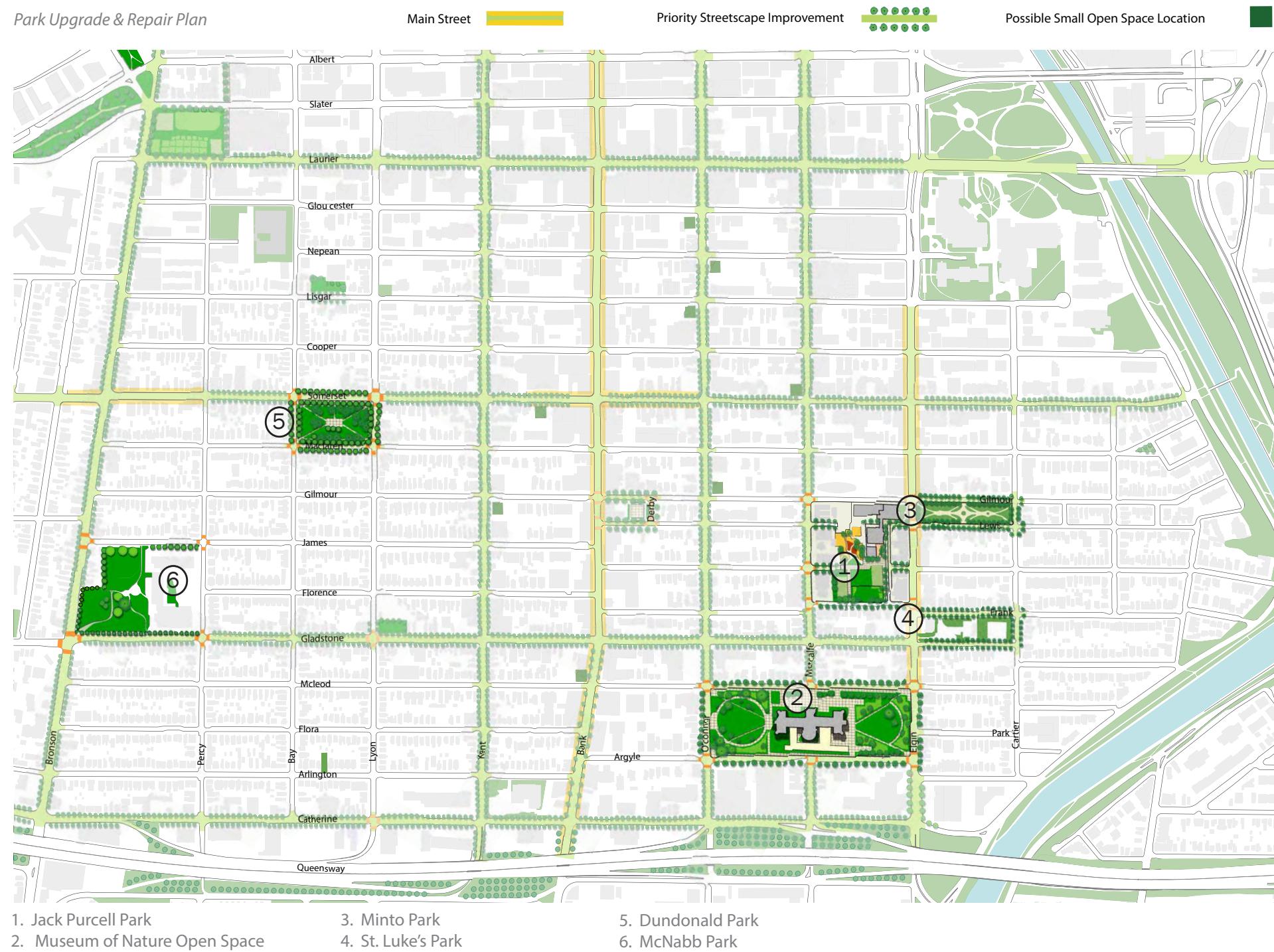
Like many urban neighbourhoods, Centretown would benefit from additional park space for its residents. However, in addition to providing new park spaces, there is great value in improving the conditions of Centretown's existing park spaces.

Due to the demands placed on the parks by their many users, many of Centretown's park spaces are looking 'tired' and would benefit from renewed investment. A review should be undertaken of existing greenspaces in Centretown to inform a strategy for their intensification and optimization of use, building on existing renewal proposals, with Dundonald, the National Museum of Nature and Minto Park being the primary opportunities. Improvement plans have already been completed for Jack Purcell Park and St. Luke's Park. Maintenance and improvements are generally funded by cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication or park improvement and redevelopment programs. Improvements could also be paid for through development charges / Section 37 contributions.

When undertaking a program of improvement for each park, the role and function of each space should be considered, as follows:

- *Museum of Nature Lawns*: Centretown's central park and event space.
- *Minto and Dundonald Parks*: Passive spaces that reinforce their heritage context.
- *Jack Purcell, St. Luke's and McNabb Parks*: Active/recreational park spaces utilized by local and regional users.
- *Queensway*: A green edge to the neighbourhood and buffer zone to 417 highway.

It is recommended that priority for park repair and upgrade be given to the Museum of Nature Lawns and Jack Purcell Park.



5.1.1 Priority Park & Open Space Upgrades

Jack Purcell Park

Associated with the Jack Purcell Community Centre and the Elgin Street School, Jack Purcell Park is one of Centretown's busiest open spaces. Adjacent to the school and the community centre, the park is used by a variety of interests, including residents, community centre patrons, school children, dog owners and visitors to Elgin Street. The park is programmed with a dog run, children's play structures, one tennis court and a skating rink.

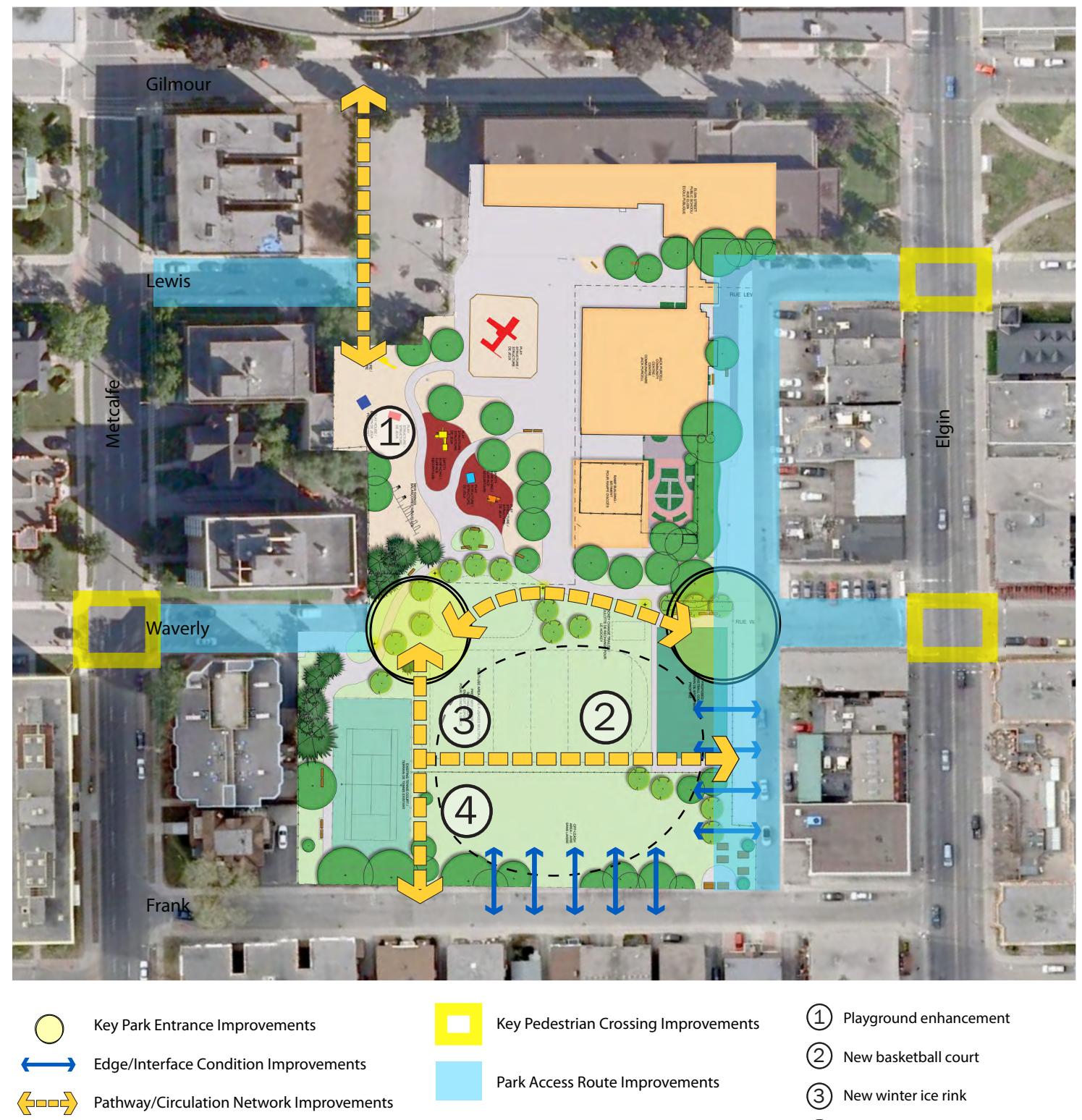
Recognizing the importance of the park to the wider community and the need to enhance the function and aesthetic of the space, the play space adjacent to Jack Purcell Park has recently benefited from an impressive community-led redevelopment initiative. This initiative will make the children's play area one of the city's few 'accessible playgrounds' and includes:

- 1) Introducing an Accessible Play Structure and Accessible Surfacing for children of all abilities;
- 2) Undertaking yard beautification through tree planting; and
- 3) Constructing a mini-soccer field, allowing children the opportunity to participate in team sport.

An improved dog run was recently completed by the City of Ottawa. In addition to these initiatives, the City and the School Board should consider leading the following improvements:

- Make the park more accessible and visible by improving its edge and access conditions. This can be done by improving the visibility and quality of the park entrances from Elgin, Gilmour and Metcalfe Streets. Improved signage, planting and pavement treatments are also required.
- Consider a tree planting scheme along those streets leading to Metcalfe Street. This would integrate the park more fully with this important green civic boulevard.
- Consider an aggressive street tree planting scheme along Waverley Street to Elgin Street. This small portion of Waverley could be reimagined as a 'green link' and the main entrance to the park from Elgin Street. This may require a reconfiguration of the existing parking.
- Screen existing parking along Jack Purcell Lane.
- Over time, the development fronting Elgin should also address the park. The laneway currently separating these uses should be treated as a shared-use mews, and potentially extended to include Waverley Street (subject to a transportation impact review).
- The chain link fence should be replaced with a style of fence that is more appropriate for the neighbourhood. The Frank Street edge particularly needs to be addressed.
- Upgrade the asphalt sidewalks within the rights-of-way to concrete sidewalks when roads are reconstructed.
- As the ownership of the park, the playground, the community centre and the school is divided between the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, each should contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the park and playground.
- Vehicular access including emergency services and parking would have to be maintained.

Jack Purcell Park Upgrade Strategy



5.1.1 Priority Park & Open Space Upgrades (cont.)

The Museum of Nature

This high-profile federally-owned site is critical for fostering a positive image, not just for Centretown, but for the City of Ottawa as a whole. As a gateway site for the community and the downtown, this open space is one of the first sights visitors see when exiting from the 417 into Centretown. Today, it is a formally arranged open space with good street exposure on all sides. The open space is primarily passive in nature and reads as the western flank of what is an incomplete landscaped block for the museum.

Although this site is clearly important to the city, its full potential has yet to be realized. Improving the quality of this site, both as a fully integrated landmark statement and as an important community amenity, should be a priority. At present, the site is poorly integrated with the surrounding neighbourhood and the highway access system fragments the east lawn, creating a physical barrier between the Museum and its open space setting. There is a need to make the open space around the museum more usable and less disjointed.

The Museum of Nature lawns should be repaired and reinstated to a high quality civic open space that celebrates the Museum, the neighbourhoods and welcomes visitors to the city. To realize this, the following actions are required and should be implemented and paid for by the Museum of Nature as part of their capital program:

- Eliminate the Metcalfe Street continuation between McLeod Street and Argyle Avenue. This will allow the open space to be expanded and the urban block structure to be restored;
- Remove the parking from the east and west lawns;
- Re-landscape the east lawn to bring it up to the same high standard as the future relandscaped west lawn;
- Existing west lawn parking lot should be relocated underground and the lawn relandscaped as a high quality open space in the short term;
- Traffic calm the intersection of McLeod and Metcalfe Streets to complement the new plaza and main entrance of Museum. Additional pedestrian crossing at intersections around the site should be considered;
- Treat Metcalfe Street and those streets fronting the Museum lawns with complementary public realm treatment (planting, lighting standard, paving, furniture, etc). This streetscape treatment will effectively expand the boundaries and draw it down Metcalfe Street; and
- Undertake a traffic impact assessment and/or traffic management plan to identify impacts of the east lawn expansion.

Today Metcalfe Street, through the Museum of Nature grounds, carries approximately 7000 vehicles a day. With the closure of the street through the East Lawn, this traffic would redistribute to other area roads. The majority of this traffic would potentially continue east on Argyle Street then turn north onto Elgin Street. Some of it may then turn left onto McLeod Street to reach Metcalfe Street or go further north on Elgin Street and turn left on streets such as Gladstone or Somerset to reach Metcalfe Street. Additional study would be required to fully assess the impacts, requirements and benefits of closing Metcalfe Street through the Museum grounds from Argyle Avenue north to McLeod Street. At a minimum, the following actions are recommended (with additional details provided as an appendix):

- Confirm the current peak hour operation of potentially affected intersections.
- Reassign the Metcalfe Street traffic to these intersections as appropriate and conduct levels of service analysis.
- Assess the required cycle length or phase timing changes at the intersection with regard to any adverse impacts on pedestrian accommodation.
- Determining if road widening is required on the Argyle Avenue on its approach to Elgin Street, or on Elgin between Argyle Avenue and McLeod Street, to accommodate the reassigned traffic at an acceptable level of service.
- Identify the potential impact on transit service of any projected congested conditions on Elgin Street; and
- Identify an alternative school and tour bus parking facility/location.

Source:
Barry Padolsky Associates Inc. Architects
KPMB Architects
Gagnon, Letellier, Cyr, Architects

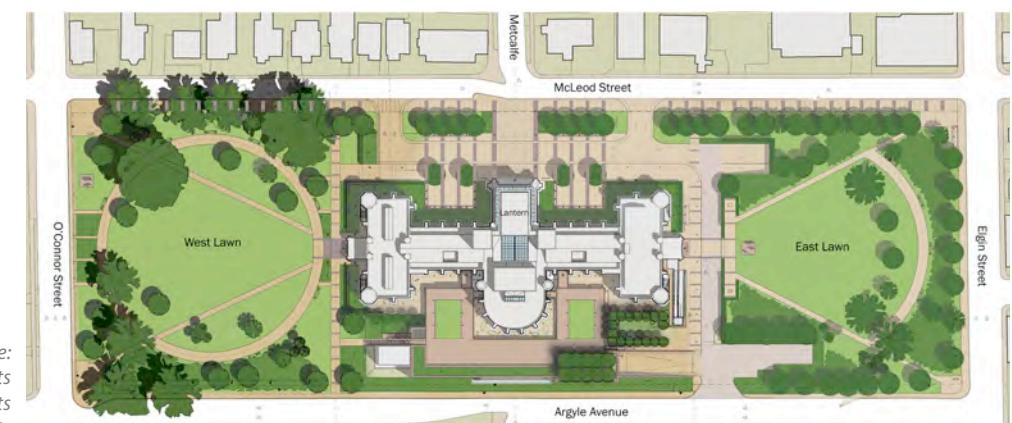
Built within the last 10 years/Under Construction	
Proposed Development	
Possible Development	
Heritage Group 1	
Heritage Group 2	



Museum of Nature Long Term Site Development Plan



Museum of Nature Current Development Plan



Museum of Nature Long Term Development Plan

5.1.2 Additional Park Upgrade & Repair

St. Luke's Park

St. Luke's is an active community hub. This urban park is highly programmed with facilities to support a number of activities, including tennis courts, a basketball court, a children's playground and a wading pool. Located only steps from Elgin Street, the park functions as an urban retreat and is well landscaped, safe and very well used by a cross section of the community. Almost a full city block in size, the park is fronted by a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Although already a successful community park, the following park upgrades should be considered and added to the current park improvement plan for the site:

- Improving the visibility and quality of the park main entrance at Elgin Street should be a priority. This can be done through improved signage, planting and pavement treatments. A full planting scheme should be considered that extends the park through to Elgin Street.
- Other access points to the park should be better marked with lighting and signage. Signage should be unified.
- As per the 2007 concept plan, the chain link fencing that surrounds the park should be replaced with decorative fencing (ideally in the style of Dundonald Park).
- There is no sidewalk on the south side of the park. If the fencing is removed, a sidewalk could be introduced to this edge within the Gladstone ROW. If the fencing is retained, it should be moved to the north to allow for the introduction of a sidewalk/path.
- Consider providing a public toilet at this location.
- When furniture is replaced over time, a coordinated palate should be introduced across the entire park (for furniture, lighting and paving materials).

McNabb Park

Associated with the McNabb Park Community Centre and Richard Plaff Alternative School / McNabb Park School, this park is one of Centretown's largest green spaces. Playing a dual role of public park and school yard, the park is very well used. The size of the park allows it to accommodate a mix of both formal and informal activities. The park is programmed with swings, a play structure, ice rink and wading pool. There is also a multi-purpose Community Centre and Arena (which also serves as an indoor skate park). The park also serves as a temporary storm water storage area. As such, changes in park grading and the retaining wall along Gladstone will be limited.

Although already a successful community park, the following park upgrades should be considered:

- The park currently lacks a strong address on Bronson Avenue. If feasible, a new access point should be introduced at the Bronson and Gladstone intersection. Alternatively, a new access from Gladstone Avenue east of the Lawn Bowling Club could be considered.
- Access points into the park should be better defined.
- Replace the chain link fence with a style of fencing more appropriate for the neighbourhood. New fencing should be moved inside the first row of trees.
- Improve integration of the Central Lawn Bowling Club within the park by coordinated signage style and potentially an upgrade to fencing (when fencing requires replacement or when park is redeveloped).
- Open up north side of the park to help it connect more directly with the neighbourhood (remove / replace fencing).
- There is an opportunity for additional planting along Bronson Avenue adjacent to the Central Lawn Bowling Club.
- When furniture is replaced over time, a coordinated palate should be introduced across the entire park (for furniture, lighting and paving materials).



St. Luke's Park



McNabb Park