

Lorne Avenue playground ready to welcome local households

Once the spring temperatures allowed the new grass to take root, the City of London took down the fences to officially open the new Lorne Avenue Park earlier this month. The park, which stands on the site of the former Lorne Avenue Public School, was designed around the themes of arts and culture, the environment, and the heritage of Old East Village.

“City staff worked with the Lorne Avenue Park Steering Committee and held public meetings with local community members to design the park in a way that would be meaningful to residents of Old East Village but also welcoming and exciting for families,” says Mayor Ed Holder. “I’m incredibly proud of the collaborative effort that led to the opening of the park.”



(The exterior letters from the Lorne Avenue Public School)

The new park features accessible walkways, an entry plaza, a unique playground made of wood, a community stage, a sensory garden, an insect hotel, rain gardens, and an ecolawn. Designers also worked to incorporate artifacts from Lorne Avenue Public School, including the late-1800s school bell from the original building and exterior signage letters from the more recent building.



(School bell from the original building)

“Lorne Avenue Public School was an important part of the history of the Old East Village and the new Lorne Avenue Park will be an exciting part of its future,” says Ward 4 Councillor Jesse Helmer. “Residents here are proud of our community and fought hard to keep the school. Thanks to the work of the community, City staff and Council, we now have a beautiful, new park to enjoy for years to come. More open public space in the core could not come at a better time.”

As a further nod to the park’s schoolyard history, traditional games like hopscotch and four square have been painted on the ground in the central plaza so that a whole new generation of kids can enjoy them.

“The closure of Lorne Avenue Public School left a large gap in the heart of Old East Village,” says Lorne Avenue Park Steering Committee member and Old East Village resident Frank Filice. “Through the collaborative efforts of the community and the City of London, the establishment of Lorne Avenue Park on the site of the former school provides a valuable public space where people of all ages can gather to socialize, exercise and play, or simply enjoy being in a pleasing outdoor area in the centre of their neighbourhood.”



(Wooden playground at Lorne Avenue Park)

Even with the playground open, there are still more developments to come. Phase 2 of Lorne Avenue Park will include the installation of lounge chairs and gardens along English Street and will be completed as part of the English Street reconstruction project that is slated to begin soon. The playground will remain open during this phase. More information can be found at: getinvolved.london.ca/lorne-avenue-park

While the City understands residents are excited about the new park opening and are looking for safe ways to exercise, it is important to follow all local health guidelines from the Middlesex-London Health Unit and the Province's Stay-at-Home order.

If the Lorne Avenue Park is busy, please consider waiting to visit it at another time. If you do visit with your household, please remember:

- The playground is open to households under the current Stay-at-Home order but the park and pathways are only open for through traffic.
- Physical distancing of two metres is required at all times with anyone outside of your household.
- Masks or face coverings are recommended outdoors.
- Practice proper hand hygiene: avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and clean your hands frequently using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- If you are experiencing any COVID-19, cold, or flu-like symptoms, please stay home and follow public health guidelines.

The City of London would like to thank the London Central Lions Club for their contribution towards the sensory garden, and the Rotary Club London East for sponsoring the insect hotel at the Lorne Avenue Park.

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