

# WESTWIND PUBLIC SCHOOL NATURALIZATION AREA

Since Westwind Public School opened the large naturalized section that takes up the majority of our school yard has posed to be challenging for a variety of reasons. Of our green space for students to access during recess and outside learning, over 50% of this space is largely unusable since it is composed of the naturalized area. The naturalized area cannot be used during recess times as the trees and undergrowth block the lines of sight required for supervision to assure safe play.

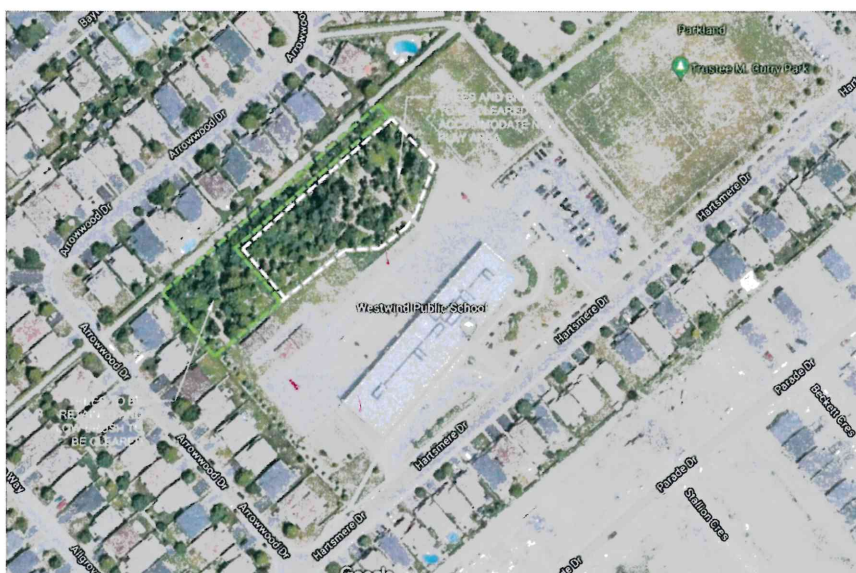
Given that 50% of the green space is not available for student use, the available play area is very crowded making it almost impossible for students to maintain physical distancing. We are not able to have all students outside at the same time for recess as we do not have enough usable space to allow for the current 900 plus students to play, nor the projected numbers for the 2022 - 2023 school year.

The growing population of Stittsville has dramatically increased enrollment at Westwind. This has resulted in 12 portables added to our already small usable area of the yard. Even with the opening of the new OCDSB school on Fernbank our projected enrollment will remain high and necessitate the need for portables.

Operational Challenges for the School:

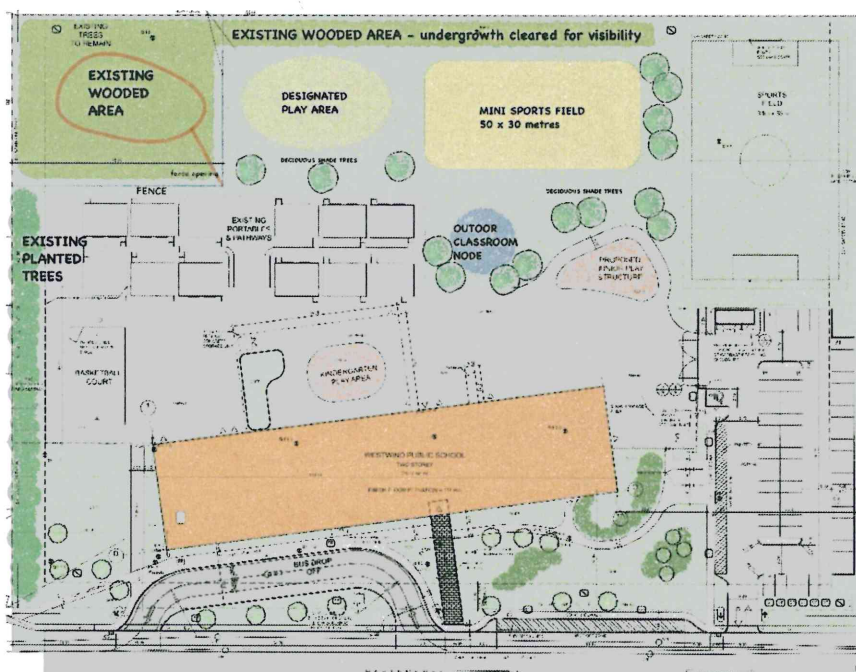
## Fire Safety

1. Students: All students must locate to the Westwind Soccer Field as our designated Muster Area. This is a small field and we are unable to locate all classes in this space. It also takes a very long time for our young kindergarten students to exit and move to the soccer field. In the event of a real fire this would not be safe. If the naturalized area was removed and sodded that space would be available as a second Muster location. This would allow us to account for each class and students more quickly
2. Structural/Community: During times when the school is not open - after hours, weekends and holidays people will build campfires in this naturalized space. Given the density of this naturalized area, this kind of unsafe activity is not within view of surrounding community members, and is a fire hazard especially during the dry summer months when the City of Ottawa has a burn ban in place.



## Student Safety

1. This area has to be inspected daily for discarded liquor/beer bottles, drug paraphernalia, feces and even building supplies like tarps, rope and wood used to build forts and structures. These forts/structures are also not safe for student use.
2. It is difficult to monitor the area for possible intruders that should not be on school property.
3. People are surprised to learn this area is on school property and not public property. We have people walking their dogs in this area during school hours.
4. The school has experienced situations where students from other school boards hid in the forest and threw rocks at Westwind students during recess
5. The area contains poison ivy/oak and possible wild parsnip. We cannot safely use this space for learning activities.
6. In 2020-2021, there was a critical injury to a student in the naturalized area.



## Accessibility

Unlike a grassed area or paved space this forested area is not accessible to all students, particularly those with mobility issues that might need a wheelchair, walker or wear leg braces.

## Yard Space

1. We are projected at 660 students for September 2022 with on-going increases over the subsequent years.
2. At recess, each class has to play in an assigned zone. With a large number of classes, the play space for each class has to shrink to accommodate the student enrollment
3. There are 6 kindergarten classes that also need play space outside
4. When many of our Physical Education classes must be held outdoors (currently all of them), multiple classes may be outside for PE at the same time. With the reduced paved area due to portables and the very limited amount of grass area to use at the moment it makes providing the PE curriculum challenging. The added grassed area would support PE learning opportunities for all our students.
5. The naturalized area cannot be used for PE classes, due to the safety concerns, supervision issues and inaccessibility to all students.

The proposed plan for the removal of a portion of the naturalized area will support the learning and play needs of our students, which is so important in their physical and cognitive growth. The plan includes leaving a buffer area between the homes - although there is a bike path already adding to a buffer zone. The removal of the trees will see an increase in the lighting and visibility on the bike path which would enhance the safety of this path for the community.

Much thought has been put into this proposal and the benefits to student safety and development as a result of having more grassed usable space.

**Because of the bird nesting season, the intent is to remove all trees intended for removal before April 15, 2022. Provided all approvals have been received by the city the remainder of the work will be carried out in the summer of 2022.**