

#### REVISED AGENDA - COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

# Thursday, March 13, 2025, 9:00 A.M. COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation Meeting will recess for a lunch break between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

**Pages** 

- A. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- B. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS
- C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- \*D. CONSENT AGENDA

# Proposals for the Consent Agenda:

- F.1 Minutes from the Committee of the Whole Meeting held January 23, 2025
- G.1 3106 Washington Avenue: Rezoning Application No. 00856,
   Development Permit with Variances No. 00289 and Development Variance
   Permit No. 00290 (Burnside)
- H.1 Crystal Pool Replacement Project: Site Selection and Next Steps
- E. PRESENTATION
  - E.1 Downtown Victoria Business Association 2025 Budget

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- F. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES
  - F.1 Minutes from the Committee of the Whole Meeting held January 23, 2025

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- G. LAND USE MATTERS
  - \*G.1 3106 Washington Avenue: Rezoning Application No. 00856, Development Permit with Variances No. 00289 and Development Variance Permit No. 00290 (Burnside)

14

#### Addendum: Presentation

A report regarding a Rezoning Application, Development Permit with Variances and Development Variance Permit for the property located at 3106 Washington Avenue in order to subdivide the property to create a new panhandle lot (Lot A), rezone Lot A from the R1-B Single Family Dwelling District Zone to a new zone

to increase the density and allow four new single-family dwellings with secondary suites, and maintain the existing house on a separate street-fronting lot (Lot B) and recommending that the application proceed to bylaw readings.

#### H. STAFF REPORTS

# H.1 Crystal Pool Replacement Project: Site Selection and Next Steps

118

A report seeking confirmation of the site for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre and direction to proceed with the design and construction.

# \*H.2 Sheltering in Parks and the Parks Regulation Bylaw

162

# Addendum: Updated Report

A report providing a comprehensive overview on the status of overnight sheltering in City parks and recommending updates to the Parks Regulation Bylaw provisions dealing with overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness.

# H.3 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan – Impact of Esquimalt Council's Decision on Police Budget

693

A report regarding the impacts of Esquimalt Council's Decision on Police Budget to the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan and recommending that the report be received for information.

#### I. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

#### J. NEW BUSINESS

# J.1 Council Member Motion: Mitigating the Impacts of the Projected Multi-Year Interrupted Service to Victoria's Aquatics and Wellness Centre

695

A Council Member Motion regarding impact mitigation of the projected facility closure, mainly through collaboration with key regional partners.

# J.2 Council Member Motion: Advocacy to the Province to Modify Amenity Cost Charge Policy to Better Support Affordable Housing

697

A Council Member Motion requesting advocacy to the Province to modify the Amenity Cost Charge policy to better support affordable housing.

# J.3 Council Member Motion: Financial Contribution to the Border Mayors Alliance

699

A Council Member Motion regarding the Border Mayors Alliance and requesting Council to contribute funds to support the operations of the Alliance and to maintain the City's membership.

#### K. CLOSED MEETING, IF REQUIRED

L.	ADJOURNMENT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

# 2025 DVBA Budget Report To Council March 13, 2025

To Mayor and Council,

This report accompanies the detailed 2025 DVBA Budget as passed by the membership at our 2024 AGM and our Board of Directors in late 2024.

As per the DVBA Bylaw:

- 4. Council must consider the proposed DVBA budget and may:
  - a. approve the budget as submitted;
  - b. request additional information or clarification from the DVBA; or
  - c. reject the proposed budget if, in Council's opinion, it does not adequately achieve the objectives of the business promotion scheme.
  - 5. If Council rejects the proposed budget, the DVBA may, within 30 days, resubmit a new proposed budget that, in addition to meeting the requirements of subsection (2), addresses Council's concerns and Council must promptly consider the revised proposed budget in accordance with subsection (4).

The budget presented is divided into four main areas:

- 1. Administration
- 2. Marketing
- 3. Clean and Safe (Clean Team)
- 4. Events

These c are designed to meet the DVBA Bylaw requirements in accordance with the following section of the DVBA Bylaw:

- carrying out studies or making reports respecting the BIA,
- the improving, beautifying, or maintaining streets, sidewalks, or municipally owned land, buildings, or structures in the BIA,
- removing graffiti from buildings and other structures in the BIA,
- conserving heritage property in the BIA, and
- encouraging business in the BIA.

Many of the line items are generally repeated year over year, as we carry out the mandated activities of the DVBA. Within the four main categories, Clean and Safe makes up the most significant portion of the budget.

Of note is the major event the DVBA runs which is Lights of Wonder. We want to thank to City for our 2025 Major Events Grant of \$200,000.00 which helps defray the costs of this large, free event. In 2024 we have over 88,000 people attend.

In 2022 the DVBA expanded its boundaries. As a result of that and the timing our increased levy, the DVBA end the year with a sizable surplus. Council noted the expectation that excess those funds were spent on the core activities of the organization. It is estimated that the residual of this surplus will be fully expended within 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Bray CEO, Downtown Victoria Business Association

			2024 Budget		2025 Proposed	
Ordinary Income/Expense						
Income						
	40000 · Reve	enues.				
		40050 · Tax Levy BIA	\$	1,762,438.00	\$ 1,832,936.00	
		40100 · Associate Memberships.	\$	250.00	\$ -	
		40150 · Interest Income				
		40200 · Clean Team Charges.				
		40250 · Grants & Subsidy				
		40260 · BFB Building Improvement Grant	\$	50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	
		40300 · Sponsorships.				
		40310 · Christmas Sponsorship	\$	200,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	
		Total 40300 · Sponsorships.	\$	200,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	
	Total 40000 ·	Revenues.	\$	2,012,688.00	\$ 2,082,936.00	
	45000 · Othe	r Income.				
Total Income			\$	2,012,688.00	\$ 2,082,936.00	
<b>Gross Profit</b>			\$	2,012,688.00	\$ 2,082,936.00	
Expense						
	50000 · ADM	INISTRATION				
		50050 · Accounting.	\$	-	\$ -	
		50100 · Parking/Auto	\$	5,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	
		50150 · Bad Debts.	\$	500.00	\$ 500.00	
		50200 · Bank Charges & Interest	\$	5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	
		50210 · CIBC Loan Interest	\$	11,000.00	\$ -	LoW loan fully repaid
		50250 · Bookkeeping.	\$	15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	
		50300 · Computer & Software Expense	\$	8,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	
		50350 · Hospitality.	\$	2,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	
		50400 · Insurance - Board/Office.	\$	15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	
		50450 - Retention/Recruitment	\$	7,000.00	\$ 7,000.00	
		50500 · Miscellaneous.	\$	2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	
		50550 · Office Expenses.	\$	12,000.00	\$ 11,000.00	
		50600 · Professional Fees.	\$	17,000.00	\$ 17,000.00	
		50650 · Rent.				

50655 · Property Taxes	\$ -			
50650 · Rent Other	\$ 46,800.00	\$	50,000.00	
Total 50650 · Rent.	\$ 46,800.00	\$	50,000.00	
50700 · Security.	\$ 800.00	\$	900.00	
50750 · Telephone/Communications.	\$ 4,000.00	\$	6,000.00	
50800 · Training.	\$ 2,500.00	\$	3,000.00	
50850 · Capital Purchases.	\$ 5,000.00	\$	5,000.00	
50900 · Depreciation Expense.	\$ 17,000.00	\$	17,000.00	
50950 · Capital Improvements.	\$ 10,000.00	\$	10,000.00	
51000 · Memberships, Dues & Subs	\$ 3,000.00	\$	6,000.00	
51050 · Research	\$ 20,000.00	\$	13,000.00	
51100 · Database	\$ 6,000.00	\$	6,000.00	
51150 · AGM	\$ 11,000.00	\$	18,000.00	
51200 · Conferences	\$ 7,500.00	\$	10,000.00	
51250 · Strategic Planning	\$ 2,000.00	\$	2,000.00	
51300 · Networking & Partnerships.	\$ 3,000.00	\$	5,000.00	
51350 · Advocacy	\$ 5,000.00	\$	5,000.00	
51400 · Relocation Expenses	\$ -	\$	-	
52000 · Payworks fees.	\$ 1,700.00	\$	1,800.00	
52050 · WCB Expense	\$ 950.00	\$	1,100.00	
52100 · Office Employee Benefits	\$ 11,000.00	\$	13,000.00	
52150 · Office Employee CPP	\$ 7,000.00	\$	8,000.00	
52200 · Office Employee El	\$ 2,600.00	\$	3,000.00	
52250 · Office - Wages	\$ 230,000.00	\$	245,000.00	COLA lift
52300 · Office - Vacation Expense		ı		
Total 50000 · ADMINISTRATION	\$ 496,350.00	\$	516,300.00	
55000 · CLEAN & SAFE & BEAUTIFUL.				
55050 · Policing Initiatives	\$ -	\$	-	
56000 · Capital Invest. & Improvements.				
56150 · Gull Grants.	\$ 3,500.00	\$	4,000.00	
56200 · Illumination Grants.	\$ 10,000.00	\$	10,000.00	
56225 · Broken Window Grant	\$ -			
56275 · Security & Vandalism Grants	\$ -			
56300 · Maintenance ongoing program	\$ 8,500.00	\$	8,500.00	

56260 · Building Improvement Grants	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	50K expense)
Total 56000 · Capital Invest. & Improvements.	\$ 122,000.00	\$ 122,500.00	•
57000 ⋅ Clean Team			
57050 · CT CPP	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	
57075 · CT EI	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 6,500.00	
57100 · CT Vacation Expense	\$ -		
57150 · CT Benefits	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 7,000.00	
57200 · CT Wages	\$ 390,000.00	\$ 430,000.00	
57250 · CT Supplies	\$ 23,000.00	\$ 26,000.00	
57300 · CT Uniforms	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	
57350 · CT Telephone	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 8,000.00	
57400 · CT Utilities	\$ 240.00	\$ 250.00	
57450 · CT Storage Expense	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00	
Total 57000 · Clean Team	\$ 477,240.00	\$ 525,750.00	•
Total 55000 · CLEAN & SAFE & BEAUTIFUL.	\$ 599,240.00	\$ 648,250.00	•
60000 · MARKETING.			
60050 · Marketing Employees CPP	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	
60075 · Marketing Employees El	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	
60100 · Marketing Empl'ees Vacation Exp	\$ -		
60150 · Marketing Employees Benefits	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	
60200 · Marketing - Wages	\$ 115,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	
61025 · Promotion / Giveaways	\$ 66,300.00	\$ 66,000.00	
61200 · Advertising	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 125,000.00	
61225 · Media Production	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 37,000.00	
61250 · DVBA Event Marketing	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	
61300 · Miscellaneous Marketing	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	
61350 · Marketing Ops& Web Management	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	
61400 · Marketing Grants	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	
61450 · Precinct Marketing	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	
Total 60000 · MARKETING.	\$ 406,300.00	\$ 420,000.00	
65000 · EVENTS.			
65050 · Events - Wages	\$ 138,000.00	\$ 130,000.00	COLA lift
65500 · Festival & Events Sponsorship	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	

66	200 · Christmas	\$	-			
66	225 · Light Maze Operations	\$	310,000.00	\$	360,000.00	
66	250 · Christmas Lights	\$	-			
						years unless new
66	275 · Light Maze Amortization Expense	\$	100,000.00	\$	5,500.00	equipment bought
66	350 · Street Activation	\$	20,000.00	\$	20,000.00	
66	400 · Seasonal Campaigns	\$	-			
66	450 · Member Engagement	\$	10,000.00	\$	20,000.00	
66	500 · Contingency	\$	-			
Total 65000 · EV	ENTS.	\$	583,000.00	\$	545,500.00	
Total Expense		\$	2,084,890.00	\$	2,130,050.00	
		-\$	72,202.00	-\$	47,114.00	· I
Net Ordinary Income		-\$	72,202.00	-\$	47,114.00	:



# January 23, 2025, 9:01 A.M. COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation

Meeting will recess for a lunch break between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Alto in the Chair, Councillor Caradonna, Councillor Coleman,

Councillor Dell, Councillor Gardiner, Councillor Hammond,

Councillor Kim, Councillor Loughton, Councillor Thompson

STAFF PRESENT: J. Jenkyns - City Manager, S. Thompson - Deputy City Manager /

Chief Financial Officer, C. Kingsley - City Clerk, S. Johnson - Director of Communications and Engagement, T. Zworski - City Solicitor, P. Rantucci - Director of Strategic Real Estate, T. Soulliere - Deputy City Manager, K. Hoese - Director of Sustainable Planning and Community Development, C. Mycroft - Manager of Intergovernmental & Media Relations, A. Johnston - Assistant Director of Development Services, B. Roder - Deputy City Clerk,

Sian Maichen – Legislative Coordinator

# A. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Committee recognized that the City of Victoria is situated on the traditional lands of the Songhees and Xwsepsum First Nations communities, they expressed their gratitude for the privilege of being on these lands and extended their thanks to the nations for their enduring stewardship.

## B. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

# G.2.a. Closed Meeting

Moved and Seconded:

That item *G.2.a. - Closed Meeting* be added to the agenda under New Business and the remainder of the agenda be reordered accordingly.

# **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

# C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved and Seconded:

That the agenda be approved as amended.

# **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

# D. CONSENT AGENDA

Committee requested that the following item be added to the Consent Agenda:

• G.1 - Council Member Motion: Advancing Climate-Resilient Communities.

Moved and Seconded:

That the following Consent Agenda items be approved:

# E.1 Minutes from the Committee of the Whole meeting held December 05, 2024

That the minutes from the Committee of the Whole meeting held December 05, 2024 be approved.

# G.1 Council Member Motion: Advancing Climate-Resilient Communities

- That Council ask the Mayor to create a letter in support of a grant application to Intact Insurance for funding to assist the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, the Sierra Club BC, the RUSH Initiative and Engage with Naturebased Solutions in their collaborative initiative directed at integrating FireSmart and ClimateSmart data into actionable tools, mobilize community participation and support suitable green infrastructure to enhance climate resilience in the CRD.
- 2. Further, that this Motion be considered at the Council meeting of January 23, 2025.

# **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

# E. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

## E.1 Minutes from the Committee of the Whole meeting held December 05, 2025

This item was added to the Consent Agenda.

# F. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

There were no Notices of Motions.

## G. NEW BUSINESS

# G.1 Council Member Motion: Advancing Climate-Resilient Communities

This item was added to the Consent Agenda.

# G.2 <u>Council Member Motion: Proposed \$125,000 grant to the Other Guise</u> Theatre to help acquire 716 Johnson Street

Committee received a Council Member Motion from Councillor Dell dated January 23, 2025 requesting that a \$125,000 grant be paid from the Major Community Events and Initiatives Grant to The Other Guise Theatre Company.

Councillor Kim recused herself from the meeting at 9:08 a.m. due to a non-pecuniary conflict of interest.

Committee discussed the following:

- Availability of spaces to support the arts community
- · Logistics of donation matches for City funding

#### Moved and Seconded:

- 1. That Council direct staff to provide the Other Guise Theatre Company with a \$125,000 grant, to be paid from the Major Community Events and Initiatives Grant, on the condition that:
  - a. The City's funding is matched by community donations or private donors, to be confirmed by city staff.

#### Amendment:

Moved and Seconded:

- 1. That Council direct staff to provide the Other Guise Theatre Company with a \$125,000 \$100,000 grant, to be paid from the Major Community Events and Initiatives Grant. on the condition that:
  - a. The City's funding is matched by community donations or private donors, to be confirmed by city staff.

OPPOSED (2): Councillor Gardiner, Councillor Hammond Conflict (1): Councillor Kim

# CARRIED (6 to 2)

#### On the main motion as amended:

1. That Council direct staff to provide the Other Guise Theatre Company with a \$100,000 grant, to be paid from the Major Community Events and Initiatives Grant.

OPPOSED (3): Councillor Gardiner, Councillor Hammond, Councillor Loughton Conflict (1): Councillor Kim

# CARRIED (5 to 3)

# G.2.a. Closed Meeting

Moved and Seconded:

MOTION TO CLOSE THE JANUARY 23, 2025 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

That Council convene a closed meeting that excludes the public under Section 90 of the *Community Charter* for the reason that the following agenda items deal with matters specified in Sections 90(1) and/or (2) of the *Community Charter*, namely:

Section 90(1) A part of a council meeting may be closed to the public if the subject matter being considered relates to or is one or more of the following:

Section 90(1)(i) the receipt of advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose.

## **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

The Committee of the Whole meeting was closed to the public at 9:59 a.m. and reopened to the public at 10:19 a.m.

Committee recessed at 10:19 a.m. and reconvened at 10:33 a.m.

#### Motion to recess:

Moved and Seconded:

That Council recess the Committee of the Whole meeting pending the completion of Daytime Council.

#### CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Committee recessed at 10:34 a.m. and reconvened at 11:01 a.m.

# G.3 <u>Council Member Motion: Balanced Information For Crystal Pool</u> <u>Referendum</u>

Committee received a Council Member Motion from Councillor Hammond and Councillor Gardiner dated January 17, 2025 requesting that Council put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum.

Committee discussed the following:

- Financial resources allocated for the upcoming referendum
- Flow of information related to ongoing and upcoming projects
- Advertisements run regarding the Crystal Pool Wellness Centre

Moved and Seconded:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

- 1. Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum
- 2. Replace upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

#### Amendment:

Moved and Seconded:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

- 1. Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum Alter the advertising of the referendum to reflect more balance
- Replace Require upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

OPPOSED (6): Councillor Caradonna, Councillor Coleman, Councillor Dell, Councillor Kim, Councillor Loughton, Councillor Thompson

# DEFEATED (3 to 6)

#### Amendment:

Moved and Seconded:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

- 1. Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum
- 2. Replace upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Changes to materials and information be made prior to January 26
- 4. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Councillor Kim left the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

OPPOSED (6): Mayor Alto, Councillor Caradonna, Councillor Coleman, Councillor Dell, Councillor Loughton, Councillor Thompson Absent (1): Councillor Kim

# DEFEATED (2 to 6)

#### Amendment:

Moved and Seconded:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

- Indicate the scale of cuts needed to fund Crystal Pool, providing meaningful comparisons <del>Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding</del> the referendum
- 2. Replace upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

OPPOSED (6): Mayor Alto, Councillor Caradonna, Councillor Coleman, Councillor Dell, Councillor Gardiner, Councillor Hammond Absent (1): Councillor Kim

# **DEFEATED (2 to 6)**

#### Amendment:

Moved and Seconded:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

- To note that other options exist if the referendum does not succeed, such as refurbishment, a smaller facility or pursuing a regional service for recreation. Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum
- 2. Replace upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Council recessed for lunch at 12:02 p.m. and reconvened at 1:08 p.m.

#### On the amendment:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

 To note that other options exist if the referendum does not succeed, such as refurbishment, a smaller facility or pursuing a regional service for recreation. Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum

- 2. Replace upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

OPPOSED (4): Mayor Alto, Councillor Caradonna, Councillor Coleman, Councillor Dell

Absent (1): Councillor Kim

# DEFEATED (4 to 4)

#### On the main motion:

That Council direct staff to immediately:

- 1. Put a stop to one-sided advertising regarding the referendum
- Replace upcoming advertising and information sessions (such as "pop up" locations) as well as the City's website to include arguments or reasoning for both the "yes" and "no" sides of the binding question on the referendum
- 3. Have this information vetted by the City Manager before changes are made

That this matter be forwarded to the January 23, 2025, Council to follow Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Opposed (6): Mayor Alto, Councillor Caradonna, Councillor Coleman, Councillor Dell, Councillor Loughton, Councillor Thompson Absent (1): Councillor Kim

# DEFEATED (2 to 6)

# I. ADJOURNMENT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Moved and Seconded:

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting be adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

# CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

CITY CLERK	MAYOR	



# **Committee of the Whole Report**

For the Meeting of March 13, 2025

**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 27, 2025

From: Karen Hoese, Director, Planning and Development

Subject: Rezoning Application No. 00856, Development Permit with Variances No. 00289

and Development Variance Permit No. 00290 for 3106 Washington Avenue

#### RECOMMENDATION

#### **Rezoning Application**

- 1. That Council instruct the director of Planning and Development to prepare the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment that would authorize the proposed development outlined in the staff report dated February 27, 2025 for 3106 Washington Avenue.
- 2. That, after publication of notification in accordance with section 467 of the *Local Government Act*, first, second and third reading of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment be considered by Council once the following conditions are met:
  - a. Revise the plans to create a more compact and efficient use of the site that better aligns with the applicable design guidelines related to site planning and outdoor space and is more consistent with the setbacks of neighbouring properties, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Development.
  - b. Revise the plans to provide a Statutory Right-of-Way at the rear of the property that is approximately 4.2m deep and up to 11.91m long and includes a 3.0m x 3.0m corner cut as determined by the Director of Engineering and Public Works and Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities to achieve an appropriate connection for the Doric Connector multi-use pathway.
  - c. Revise the long-term bicycle parking for compliance with Schedule C Off Street Parking Regulations to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Development.
- 3. That following the third reading of the zoning amendment bylaw, the applicant prepare and execute the following legal agreement, with contents satisfactory to the Director of Planning and Development and form satisfactory to the City Solicitor prior to adoption of the bylaw:
  - a. a Statutory Right-of-Way at the rear of the property that is approximately 4.2m deep and up to 11.91m long and includes a 3.0m x 3.0m corner cut as determined by the Director

- of Engineering and Public Works and Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities to achieve an appropriate connection for the Doric Connector Multi-use pathway.
- 4. That adoption of the zoning bylaw amendment will not take place until all of the required legal agreements that are registrable in the Land Title Office have been so registered to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor.
- 5. That the above Recommendations be adopted on the condition that they create no legal rights for the applicant or any other person, or obligation on the part of the City or its officials, and any expenditure of funds is at the risk of the person making the expenditure.

#### **Development Permit with Variances Application (Panhandle Lot)**

That subject to the design refinements as noted above, and with any subsequent updates to the variances reflecting those refinements, that Council, after giving notice consider the following motion:

- 1. That subject to the adoption of the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment, Council authorizes the issuance of Development Permit with Variances No. 00856 for 3106 Washington Avenue for the subdivision of the panhandle lot and subsequent construction of four single family dwellings with secondary suites in accordance with the plans submitted to the Planning and Development department and date stamped by Planning on February 6, 2025, subject to the following conditions, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Development:
  - a. Where plan revisions aligning with staff recommendations may require an additional variance, the proposed development meeting all City zoning bylaw requirements, except for the following variances:
    - i. increase the number of buildings (not including accessory buildings) permitted on the lot from one to four
    - ii. reduce the minimum front yard setback from 7.50m to 2.79m
    - iii. reduce the minimum rear yard setback from 7.50m to a minimum of 5.0m
    - iv. reduce the south side yard setback from 7.50m to 2.42m
    - v. reduce the separation space between the accessory building and primary structures from 2.4m to 1.19m
    - vi. locate the accessory buildings in the side yard.
  - b. Provide additional outdoor space for the primary and secondary suites, either as private outdoor space or communal outdoor space through site layout efficiencies.
  - c. Move the structures further away from the Sequoia tree to ensure adequate light for the proposed primary and secondary units after the tree is pruned and as it continues to grow.
- 2. That the Development Permit, if issued, lapses two years from the date of this resolution.

#### **Development Variance Permit Application**

That Council, after giving notice, consider the following motion:

1. That subject to the adoption of the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment, Council authorizes the issuance of Development Variance Permit No. 00290 at 3106 Washington Avenue

for the subdivision of the lot, in accordance with plans submitted to the Planning department and date stamped by Planning on February 6, 2025, subject to:

- a. Proposed development meeting all City zoning bylaw requirements, except for the following variances:
  - i. reduce the north side yard setback for Lot B, as identified on the plans from 1.95m to 0.8m.
- b. Where plan revisions aligning with staff recommendations may require an additional variance, the proposed development meeting all City bylaw requirements, except for the following variance, to be confirmed through the revision process:
  - i. reduce the north side yard setback for Lot B from 10.62m to a minimum of 5m.
- 2. That the Development Variance Permit, if issued, lapses two years from the date of this resolution.

#### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This report discusses a Rezoning Application, Development Permit with Variances and Development Variance Permit Application. The relevant considerations for each application are as follows:

- Rezoning considerations include the proposal to increase the density and add multiple single-family dwellings with secondary suites as new uses on a new panhandle lot.
- Development Permit with Variance considerations relate to the application's consistency with design guidelines and the impact of variances for the proposed panhandle lot (Lot A).
- Development Variance Permit considerations relate to the impact of variances for the proposed street-fronting lot (Lot B).

# **Enabling Legislation**

In accordance with Section 479 of the *Local Government Act*, Council may regulate within a zone the use of land, buildings and other structures, the density of the use of the land, building and other structures, the siting, size and dimensions of buildings and other structures as well as the uses that are permitted on the land and the location of uses on the land and within buildings and other structures.

In accordance with Section 489 of the *Local Government Act*, Council may issue a Development Permit in accordance with the applicable guidelines specified in the *Official Community Plan*. A Development Permit may vary or supplement the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* but may not vary the use or density of the land from that specified in the Bylaw.

Pursuant to Section 491 of the *Local Government Act*, where the purpose of the designation is the establishment of objectives for the form and character of intensive residential development, a Development Permit may include requirements respecting the character of the development including landscaping, and the siting, form, exterior design and finish of buildings and other structures.

In accordance with Section 498 of the *Local Government Act*, Council may issue a Development Variance Permit that varies a *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* provided the permit does not vary the use or

density of land from that specified in the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to present Council with information, analysis and recommendations for a Rezoning Application, Development Permit with Variances Application and a Development Variance Permit Application for the property located at 3106 Washington Avenue. The proposal is to:

- subdivide the property in order to create a new panhandle lot (Lot A),
- rezone Lot A from the R1-B Single Family Dwelling District Zone to a new zone to increase the density and allow four new single-family dwellings with secondary suites, and
- maintain the existing house on a separate street-fronting lot (Lot B).

The concurrent Development Permit with Variances Application pertains to the proposed siting, form, character and landscaping associated with development of Lot A, as well as variances related to setbacks and siting. The variances in the proposed motion represent the estimated maximum potential adjustments required to shift the buildings to accommodate the Statutory Right-of-Way, enhance site efficiency by reducing paved areas, and preserve additional open space.

The concurrent Development Variance Permit pertains to the variances related to the new setbacks of the existing house that would be created through the proposed subdivision.

Although there are site planning challenges identified with the proposal, the recommended motion allows for relatively minor changes by shifting the buildings forward approximately 3 to 5m in a way that would address many of these concerns. The motion also allows the opportunity to make more significant changes to the site planning and built form, should the applicant opt to take this approach to better align with policy and design guidelines.

The following points were considered in assessing the Rezoning Application:

- The proposed density and use are generally consistent with the Traditional Residential Urban Place Designation in the *Official Community Plan* (OCP), which supports ground-oriented residential buildings from two to three storeys, and a density of up to approximately 1.1:1 floor space ratio (FSR). However, the proposed four single-family dwellings with suites on one panhandle lot is not a housing form that is contemplated in the OCP.
- The proposal is inconsistent with both the Missing Middle regulations and the Panhandle Lot regulations in terms of use, siting and provision of open space.
- The existing house on the site has been identified in the *Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan* (BGNP) as having heritage merit. Heritage designating the house as part of a Missing Middle Heritage Conserving Infill development would meet heritage objectives identified in the BGNP and OCP The applicant has declined a request to designate the house as heritage.
- To support the objectives of the *Pedestrian Master Plan*, 2008, the *Greenways Plan*, 2003, the BGNP and related OCP transportation policies, a Statutory Right-of-Way (SRW) is recommended to help achieve an accessible multi-use pathway (the Doric Connector multi-use pathway) in this location. The applicant has not agreed to this request; however, the recommendation includes appropriate language to revise the plans and secure the SRW should Council choose to advance the application.

The following points were considered in assessing the Development Permit with Variance:

- The proposal is inconsistent with the Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan (BGNP), which supports ground-oriented sensitive infill development on large lots along Washington Avenue, promoting diverse family housing forms like row houses or townhouses. Consideration of alternatives similar to Missing Middle heritage conserving infill or attached townhouses is encouraged.
- The proposal for a panhandle lot with detached houses set near the rear of the site and adjacent to a giant Sequoia tree results in inconsistencies with the objectives and design guidelines of Development Permit Area 15F: Missing Middle Housing related to development of larger lots, preservation of open space, access to natural light and response to heritage context, including existing buildings with heritage merit.
- The proposal also falls under Development Permit Area 15B: Intensive Residential Panhandle Lot (DPA 15B), which aims to mitigate the potential impact of on neighboring properties through increased setbacks and lower scaled building forms. The proposed rearmost building is only 1.52m from the property line, which limits usable outdoor space, creates overlook concerns and is inconsistent with the setback pattern of adjacent infill developments.

The associated Development Variance Permit (DVP) is to reduce the required north side yard setback from 1.95m to 0.8m. This is a result of the proposed new lot line created by the panhandle driveway. The existing house and proposed Lot B would remain in the R1-B, Single Family Dwelling District Zone and are not subject to design guidelines.

Due to the inconsistencies with OCP policies and associated design guidelines, the recommendation is to move the application forward subject to plan revisions; however, should Council wish to advance the application as presented, an alternate motion has been provided at the end of this report.

#### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Description of Proposal**

The proposal is to subdivide the property in order to create a new panhandle lot (Lot A) and rezone from the R1-B Zone, Single Family Dwelling District, to a new zone to increase the density and allow four new single-family dwellings with secondary suites on Lot A. The existing house would be maintained on a separate lot fronting Washington Avenue (Lot B).

The following differences from the current zoning are being proposed, which will be discussed in relation to the concurrent Development Permit with Variances Application for Lot A and the Development Variance Permit Application for Lot B:

Lot A (proposed panhandle)

- increase the number of buildings (not including accessory buildings) permitted on the lot from one to four
- reduce the minimum front yard setback from 7.50m to 2.79m
- reduce the rear yard setback from 7.50m to 1.52m

- reduce the south side yard setback from 7.50m to 2.42m
- permit the accessory buildings to be located in the side yard
- reduce the separation space between the accessory buildings from 2.40m to 1.19m.

# Lot B (existing house)

• reduce the north side yard setback from 1.95m to 0.8m.

Additional differences from the existing zone include the maximum floor area, height and site coverage. These differences would be incorporated into the new zone for Lot A.

The **recommended motion** includes the above variances with two differences, as follows:

- Lot A (adjusted variance) reduce the rear yard setback from 7.50m to a minimum of 5m
- Lot B (new variance) reduce the rear yard setback from 10.61 to a minimum of 5m

The motion includes a recommendation to revise the building siting to create a more efficient use of the space, which specifically includes the potential to move the buildings forward on the lot and allow for additional outdoor space and provision of a Statutory Right-of-Way that would support the completion of the Doric Connector multi-use pathway. These recommended variances represent the estimated maximum differences from the existing zone if the applicant were to take this approach.

The Zoning Data Table attached to this report compares the proposal with Schedule P: Missing Middle Regulations, R1-B Zone, and the R2-61 Zone, Washington District, a new zone that was recently created in 2021 for the multiple townhouse development directly to the south.

# **Land Use Context and Existing Site Development Potential**

The area is characterized by a mix of single-family dwellings, townhouses and multi-unit residential buildings.



Under the current R1-B zone the property could be developed as a missing middle development subject to Schedule P: Missing Middle Regulations in the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*. This includes potential heritage conserving infill Missing Middle development, which allows for new infill development on sites where existing houses with heritage merit are Heritage Designated. The *Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan* has identified the existing house as having heritage merit.

The existing house could also be further developed through the House Conversion regulations, which allows multiple units within existing buildings constructed prior to 1984. The House Conversion regulations also allow for more units in Heritage Designated buildings.

#### **Community Consultation**

Consistent with the *Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) Procedures for Processing Rezoning and Variance Applications*, prior to submission of the application, it was posted on the Development Tracker along with an invitation to complete a comment form on June 2, 2023. Mailed notification was sent to owners and occupiers of property within 100m of the subject property advising that a consultation process was taking place and that information could be obtained and feedback provided through the Development Tracker. A sign was also posted on site, to notify those passing by of this consultative phase. Additionally, the applicant participated in a virtual meeting with the CALUC on July 2,2023. A letter dated June 22, 2023, along with the comment forms are attached to this report.

Section 464(3) of the *Local Government Act* prohibits a local government from holding a public hearing for a rezoning application that is consistent with the OCP and is intended to permit residential development. However, notice must still be sent to all owners and occupiers of adjacent properties prior to introductory readings of the zoning regulation bylaws.

The associated application proposes variances, therefore, in accordance with the City's *Land Use Procedures Bylaw*, it requires notice, sign posting and a meeting of Council to consider the variances.

#### **ANALYSIS**

#### **Rezoning Application**

# Official Community Plan

The subject property is designated Traditional Residential in the *Official Community Plan* (OCP), which supports two to three storey ground-oriented residential buildings and a density of up to approximately 1.1:1 floor space ratio (FSR). While the density is in line with the infill anticipated in the OCP, the built form and site layout does not algin with OCP objectives related to efficient site planning to maintain useable greenspace and support sustainable mobility.

Sustainable Mobility - Road Dedication and Statutory Right-of-Way Request

A 1.38m road dedication along Washington Avenue would be required at the subdivision stage to help achieve a standard local classified road right-of-way. The applicant is amenable to providing this SRW.

The applicant has not agreed to providing a Statutory Right-of-Way (SRW) at the south-west corner of the property. This SRW would contribute to completion of the Doric Connector (See figure 1, below). The Doric Connector is envisioned as a multi-use connection between the Galloping Goose Trail and Maddock Avenue East. The pathway has been recognized as a long-standing priority for the Burnside Gorge neighbourhood. It was first conceived as a concept in the early 1990s and has since been included in the *Greenways Plan*, *Pedestrian Master Plan*, *Official Community Plan*, and the more recent *Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan*. The connector has been built in sections as opportunities to acquire land have arisen, resulting in significant pauses in construction. Once completed, this pathway will support increased connectivity within the neighbourhood and encourage active transportation among residents in the City of Victoria and District of Saanich.

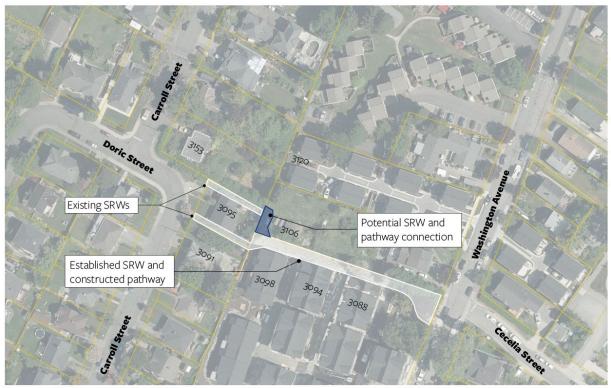


Figure 1: potential SRW in context

In 2021, a segment of the pathway was approved as part of a development application at 3080 / 3098 Washington Avenue. This portion of the pathway has now been constructed. For the portion of pathway connecting to Doric Street, there are two SRWs on either side of the lot at 3095 Carroll Street registered in favour of the City. The terms of these SRWs provide options to extend the pathway.

Securing the SRW at 3106 Washington Avenue would connect the path to the north SRW at 3095 Carroll Street, providing an important opportunity to build the path to more adequate standards. Without this SRW, the options for connecting the existing SRWs to the south do not provide adequate space to achieve best practices in multi-use pathway design. Additionally, the connection to the south, using the existing SRW at 3095 Carroll Street in order to complete the Doric Connector would result in significant impacts to the Carroll Street property, including deck removal, removal and closure of potential side entrances as well as gas line reconfiguration.

The current proposed siting of the rearmost house is within the requested SRW area. A revision to the site plan would be required to increase the rear yard setbacks on the lot and move the proposed house out of the SRW area. The approach of increasing the rear setback is aligned with the approach to addressing inconsistencies with applicable design guidelines and likely tree impacts identified in this report. For these reasons, the recommendation includes the SRW requirement and plan revisions as part of the Rezoning Application.

#### Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan

Consistent with policies of the OCP, The *Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan* (BGNP) encourages ground-oriented infill development on large lots along Washington Avenue, including diverse housing forms, such as row houses or townhouses suitable for families that are appropriate within the Traditional Residential OCP designation. This objective is aimed at development approaches that maximize the efficiency of the site and allow for consolidated open site space and a variety of unit types. While the application provides additional units through infill, the single-family dwelling with secondary suite housing form and panhandle subdivision site layout is not an encouraged approach to infill development.

The existing house on the site has been identified in the BGNP as having heritage merit. Heritage designating the house as part of a Missing Middle development would meet heritage objectives identified in the BGNP and OCP. This approach could also potentially avoid the need for a rezoning.

#### **Housing**

The application, if approved, would add approximately eight new residential units, four of which would be secondary suites, to the overall supply of housing in the area and contribute to the targets set out in the *Victoria Housing Strategy*.

#### Housing Mix

As submitted, the four single family dwellings would each have three bedrooms, while the four secondary suites would each have one bedroom.

#### **Development Permit with Variances (Panhandle Lot)**

# Official Community Plan: Design Guidelines

The Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies this property within Development Permit Area 15F: Missing Middle Housing, with associated design guidelines applying to all missing middle housing forms. The proposal for a panhandle subdivision with single-family dwellings and secondary suites is not supportable, as it results in inconsistencies with the objectives and design guidelines for DPA 15F, particularly in terms of housing form, siting, impacts on adjacent properties, and open site space. Specific issues include:

The south side yard setbacks result in insufficient landscaping to ensure sensitive transitions
to adjacent existing developments and open spaces. The perpendicular configuration of the
units effectively turns what is technically a side yard into a rear yard for the proposed units.
This creates limited outdoor space for the primary units.

- The secondary suites are not provided with any private or usable outdoor space.
- The proposed siting of the rear-most building and associated parking stall will have impacts on the crown of the Sequoia tree through partial pruning which is also likely to create shading for both the primary unit and secondary suite.
- The design guidelines prioritize clustering of buildings and parking to avoid disturbing natural
  features, provide open space to support the urban forest, offer amenity space for residents,
  reduce storm water runoff, and ensure that sites are not dominated by parking. Moving the
  buildings closer to the street would allow for some additional consolidation of open space
  and would improve access to natural light for the units in the rear-most building closest to
  the Sequoia tree.
- The guidelines related to Heritage Conserving Infill encourage development that is subordinate to the heritage merit house with prominent entrances visible from the street. The configuration of the existing building and garage, provides limited opportunity for the proposed buildings to have a strong connection to the street; however, their scale and placement do not overpower or overshadow the existing heritage merit building.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) also identifies this property within Development Permit Area 15B: Intensive Residential – Panhandle Lot (DPA 15B). The purpose of this DPA is to establish objectives for panhandle developments, acknowledging that they may have greater impacts on neighbouring properties. Schedule H - Panhandle Regulations within the Zoning Regulation Bylaw provides the regulatory framework for proposed panhandle developments.

In general, in can be challenging for panhandle subdivisions to achieve cohesive and efficient design as compared to one consolidated development. on larger lots. The Missing Middle guidelines do suggest that panhandle lots may be considered in conjunction with a Heritage Designation, however, as noted, the applicant is not proposing heritage designation.

#### Rear Yard Variance

Both DPA 15B and the BGNP promote harmonious infill, considering factors such as setbacks, overlook and greenspace. The proposed rear-most building is only 1.52m from the property line, which limits usable outdoor space, creates overlook concerns and disrupts the almost 6m setback pattern established by the recent infill developments on either side of the subject property.

As described below an alternative approach more closely in line with the Missing Middle regulations would better align with applicable design guidelines as well as broader mobility, heritage and greenspace objectives. The recommended motion includes a potential variance of a minimum of 5m, which would help to resolve these issues and also accommodate a new SRW for the Doric Connector multi-use pathway.

#### **Bike Parking**

While the proposed long-term bike parking does not meet the existing regulations in terms of dimensions, this can be resolved with minor modifications to the design which the applicant has committed to doing. Wording to this effect is included in the recommended and alternate motions. This would likely reduce the number of off-street bicycle parking stalls but could still meet or exceed the minimum requirement laid out in Schedule C – Off Street Parking Regulations of the *Zoning* 

Regulation Bylaw.

# **Development Variance Permit Application**

#### Side yard setback

As a result of the subdivision, the new north side yard setback for the existing house will be reduced to 0.8m (to the exterior stairs on the side of the house), where the requirement is 1.95m. This reduction is due to the proposed panhandle driveway. The majority of the massing of the existing house has a setback closer to 3.68m. Given this context, along with the consideration that setback would be to the panhandle driveway and not directly onto the houses along the property to the north, this variance is considered to be minor and supportable.

## Rear yard setback

There is currently no rear yard setback variance proposed for the existing house. The requirement is for 10.62m (25% of the lot depth) and 10.96m is proposed, as measured to the rear deck. The rear yard setback requirement is based on the lot depth, where larger lots, such as this proposed lot, have a greater setback requirement. The setback requirement for a more typically sized lot in the R1-B zone is 7.50m, and for comparison, the Missing Middle regulations have a minimum rear yard setback of 5m.

Given these factors, it is recommended that a potential reduced setback to a minimum of 5m to the existing deck would retain useable outdoor space and be considered minor and supportable. This would only be required if the siting revisions outlined in the staff recommendation were to be pursued and does not apply to the current proposed plans.

# <u>Tree Preservation Bylaw and Urban Forest Master Plan</u>

The goals of the *Urban Forest Master Plan* include protecting, enhancing, and expanding Victoria's urban forest and optimizing community benefits from the urban forest in all neighbourhoods.

Thirteen trees have been inventoried. Of these, there are five bylaw protected trees located on the subject property. Four bylaw trees are proposed for removal as they are within the building envelope or conflict with the proposed driveway. There are two municipal trees proposed for removal to facilitate frontage improvements.

Giant Sequoia, #201, is a specimen tree that will be impacted by construction. The alternate motion to advance the application as it is currently presented includes a condition to provide further information to determine the retention status of the tree. All neighbouring trees will be retained following recommended mitigation measures.

The landscape plan shows six new trees on the subject lot, including four trees to comply with requirements of the tree bylaw. New municipal trees are not proposed on the frontage due to the presence of a high-pressure water main.

#### **Alternate Approach**

Notwithstanding the issues identified with the current proposal, the recommended motion lays out an alternate approach for the proposal to better align with OCP objectives that would involve relatively minor changes to the currently proposed siting and would be more in line with the relatively new pattern of development established by neighbouring properties. This recommendation is to shift the buildings forward approximately 4.5m. The increased rear setback would be a more efficient use of the space consistent with adjacent development patterns while maintaining adequate separation and green space for the existing house. This would also align with the sustainable mobility objectives and reduce tree impacts identified in this report.

While this siting change would make an SRW for the Doric Connector possible, even if the SRW was not secured, the revised siting would still bring the application in closer alignment to the OCP and BGNP. This approach would allow for the preservation of additional greenspace for the development, reduce the impacts on the Sequoia tree and could potentially be utilized as a common outdoor amenity space for residents, objectives identified in both the OCP and BGNP. Moving the proposed buildings forward would further reduce the back yard area for the existing house; however, the remaining area would still allow for the amount of useable outdoor spaces envisioned in the Missing Middle design guidelines.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The applicable policies and neighbourhood pattern of development support increased density through infill development. The large size of the existing lot offers an opportunity to efficiently configure infill to not only add multi-family housing, but also create usable private and communal outdoor space, retain greenspace and the urban forest canopy and meet important mobility objectives. The proposal currently does not meet these OCP objectives.

The **recommended motion** provides the flexibility to make relatively minor changes by moving buildings forward in a way that would better address many of these concerns. With this approach, the existing house would still not be protected through Heritage Designation and would still have inconsistencies with the applicable design guidelines related to building form and lot subdivision. Despite this, it could come in closer alignment with site planning, greenspace and transportation objectives. This includes the recommended SRW, which would facilitate the completion of the Doric Connector multi-use pathway.

It is therefore recommended for Council's consideration that the application be advanced subject to plan revisions outlined in the recommended motion to improve its alignment with City policies.

Alternate Options to decline the application (Alternate Option 1) or to advance the application generally as presented (Alternate Option 2) are provided below.

#### **ALTERNATE MOTIONS**

# Alternate Option 1 - Decline

That Council decline Rezoning Application No. 00856, Development Permit with Variances Application No. 00289 and Development Variance Permit Application No. 00290 for the property

located at 3106 Washington Avenue.

# Alternate Option 2 - Advance as Presented

Advances the application with conditions to provide additional information regarding construction methods and impacts to the Sequoia tree as well as provide long-term bicycle parking revisions in order to comply with the zoning regulation requirements.

## **Rezoning Application**

- 1. That Council instruct the Director of Planning and Development to prepare the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment that would authorize the proposed development outlined in the staff report dated February 27, 2025 for the property located at 3106 Washington Ave.
- 2. That, after publication of notification in accordance with section 467 of the *Local Government Act*, first, second and third reading of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment be considered by Council once the following conditions are met:
  - a. Revise the Arborist Impact Assessment and Root Mapping report for the Sequoia #201 to include:
    - i. Confirm the line of excavation with measurements from the tree and proposed building and provide details on shoring techniques to be used to ensure retention of the tree.
    - ii. Additional information on pruning impacts including photos and anticipated building clearance that can be provided.
  - b. Revise the long-term bicycle parking for compliance with Schedule C Off Street Parking Regulations.
- 3. That prior to subdivision of the lot, the applicant dedicate as highway pursuant to section 107 of the Land Title Act a 1.38m right-of-way along Washington Avenue to the satisfaction of the Director of Engineering and Public Works.
- 4. That adoption of the zoning bylaw amendment will not take place until all of the required legal agreements that are registrable in the Land Title Office have been so registered to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor.
- 5. That the above Recommendations be adopted on the condition that they create no legal rights for the applicant or any other person, or obligation on the part of the City or its officials, and any expenditure of funds is at the risk of the person making the expenditure.

#### **Development Permit with Variances (Panhandle Lot)**

That Council, after giving notice, consider the following motion:

 That subject to the adoption of the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw, Council authorize the issuance of Development Permit with Variances No. 00289 for 3106 Washington Avenue for the subdivision of the panhandle lot and subsequent construction of four single family dwellings with secondary suites, in accordance with plans submitted to the Planning and Development department and date stamped by Planning on February 6, 2025, subject to:

- a. Proposed development meeting all City zoning bylaw requirements, except for the following variances:
  - i. increase the number of buildings (not including accessory buildings) permitted on the lot from one to four
  - ii. reduce the minimum front yard setback from 7.50m to 2.79m
  - iii. reduce the minimum rear yard setback from 7.50m to 1.52m
  - iv. reduce the minimum south side yard setback from 7.5m to 2.42m
  - v. reduce the separation space between the accessory building and primary structures from 2.4m to 1.19m
  - vi. locate the accessory buildings in the side yard.
- 2. That the Development Permit with Variances, if issued, lapses two years from the date of this resolution.

## **Development Variance Permit Application**

That Council, after giving notice, consider the following motion:

- That subject to the adoption of the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw amendment, Council
  authorizes the issuance of Development Variance Permit No. 00290 for 3106 Washington
  Avenue for the subdivision of the lot, in accordance with plans dated February 6, 2025, subject
  to:
  - a. Proposed development meeting all City zoning bylaw requirements, except for the following variances:
    - i. reduce the north rear yard setback for Lot B, as identified on the plans from 1.95m to 0.8m
- 2. That the Development Variance Permit, if issued, lapses two years from the date of this resolution.

Respectfully submitted,

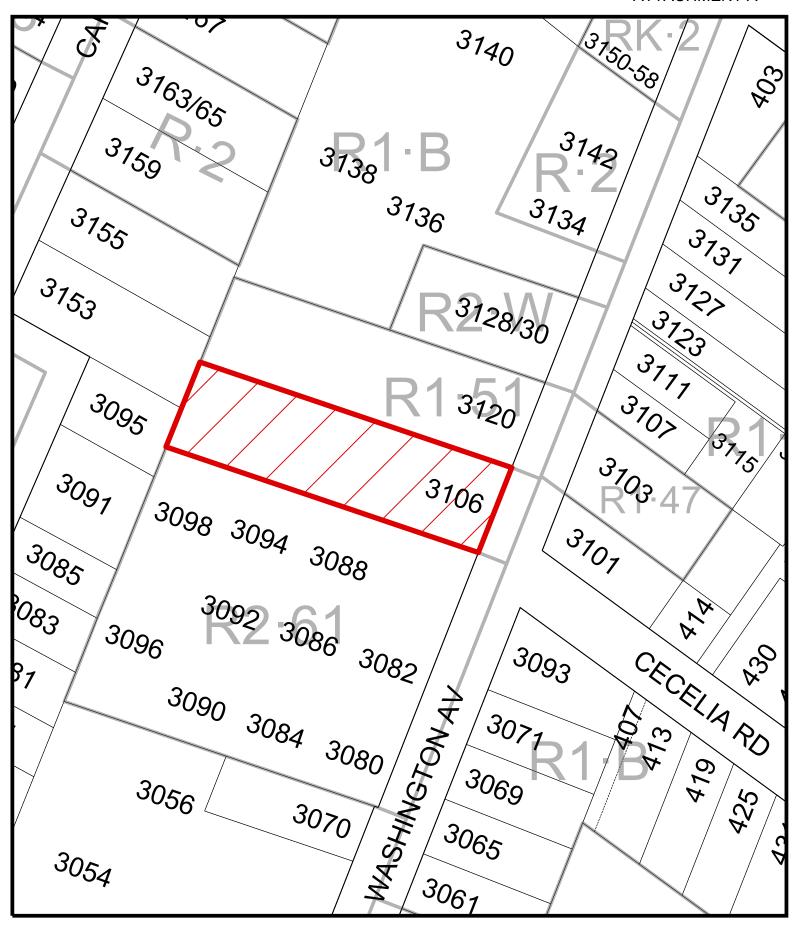
Chloe Tunis Senior Planner Development Services Division Karen Hoese, Director Planning and Development Department

#### Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

#### **List of Attachments**

- Attachment A: Subject Map
- Attachment B: Zoning Data Table
- Attachment C: Plans date stamped February 6, 2025

- Attachment D: Letter from applicant to Mayor and Council received February 6, 2025
- Attachment E: Arborist Report received February 6, 2025
- Attachment F: Arborist Impact Assessment received February 6, 2025
- Attachment G: Tree Management Plan received February 6, 2025
- Attachment H: Community Association Land Use Committee Comments dated June 22, 2023
- Attachment I: Pre-Application Consultation Comments from Online Feedback Form
- Attachment J: Correspondence







#### **Data Table**

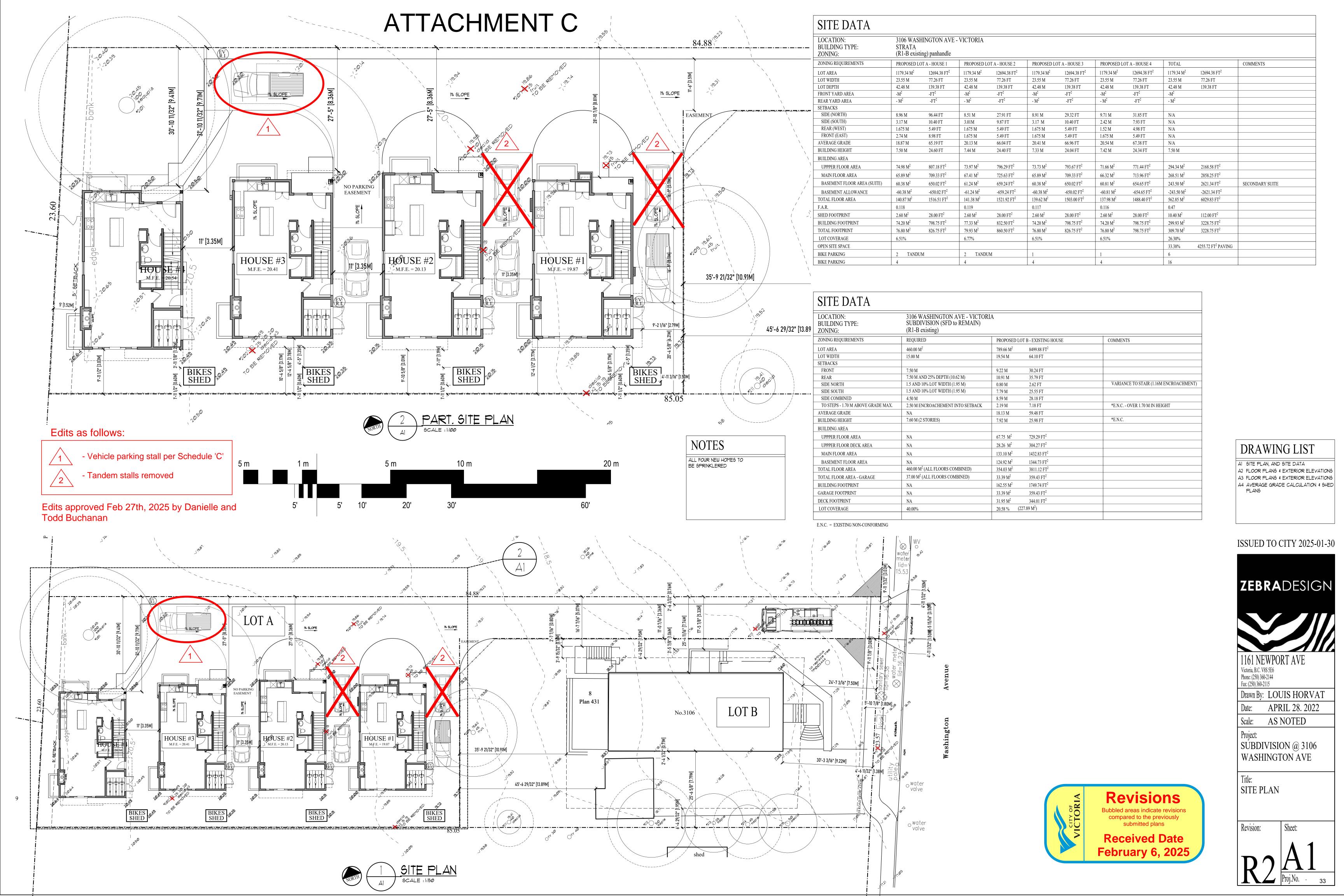
The following data table compares the proposal with Schedule P -Missing Middle Regulations, the R1-B Zone, and the R2-61 Zone, Washington District, a new zone that was recently created in 2021 for the multiple townhouse development directly to the south. For the comparison to Schedule P – Missing Middle Regulations, it is specifically compared to the Heritage Conserving Infill section of the bylaw, which this site would be eligible for subject to the heritage designation of the existing building. Neither Schedule P nor the R2-61 zone permit the subdivision of the site into a panhandle. Some calculations would have minor differences if the site were not subdivided.

For the comparison to R1-B zone, the proposed new lot would be subject to Schedule H- Panhandle lot regulations. An asterisk is used to identify where the proposal does not meet the requirements of the existing Zone. I for the proposed panhandle lot, the requirements are Schedule H – Panhandle Lot Regulations.

Zoning Criteria	Proposal- New Panhandle Lot	Zone Standard Schedule H  - Panhandle Lot Regulations	Zone Standard Schedule P  - Missing Middle Regulations	Zone- R2-61 (adjacent non- panhandle lot)	Proposal- Existing building	Existing Zone- R1-B
Site area (m²) – minimum	1001.03 (no panhandle) 1178.22 (with panhandle)	600 (exclusive of panhandle connection)	n/a	899	790.44	460
Panhandle	New panhandle	Permitted	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	n/a	Not permitted
Number of units – maximum	8 ** (4 units with secondary suites)	1 with secondary suite	n/a	n/a	1 with secondary suite	1
Density (Floor Space Ratio) – maximum	0.48 (including panhandle)	n/a	1.11 (with heritage designation)	0.78:1	n/a	n/a
All floor area (m²) – maximum	806.35**	420	1,410	634	354.03	460
Lot width (m) – minimum	23.60	15	18	22	19.54	15
Height (m) – maximum	7.50**	5	7.60	11.1m	7.92**	7.60
Storeys – maximum	2	1	n/a	3	2.5**	2

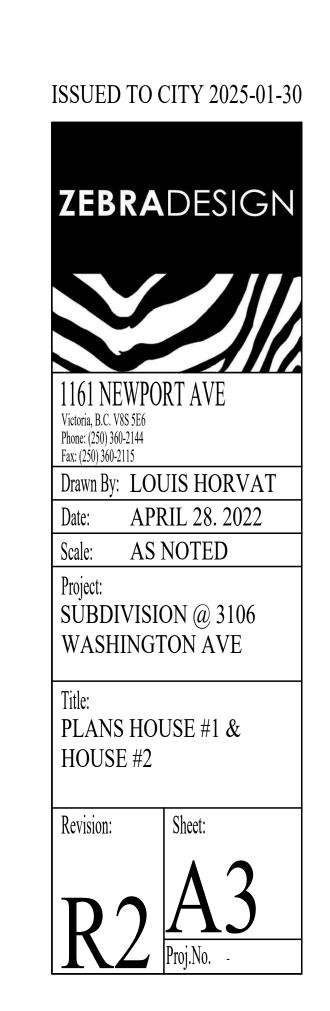
Zoning Criteria	Proposal- New Panhandle Lot	Zone Standard Schedule H – Panhandle Lot Regulations	Zone Standard Schedule P  - Missing Middle Regulations	Zone- R2-61 (adjacent non- panhandle lot)	Proposal- Existing building	Existing Zone- R1-B
Site coverage (%) – maximum	26.31	25	50	40	28.83	40
Open site space (%) – minimum	33.38	n/a	30	39	n/a	n/a
Setbacks (m) – minimum						
Front	2.00**	7.50	4	4	7.84	7.50
Rear	1.52**	7.50	5	5.50	10.91 (to deck) ~15.1 (to house)	10.62
Side (north)	8.36	7.50	5.00	5.45	0.8**	1.95
Side (south)	1.50**	7.50	2.42	3.40m	7.79	3
Parking – minimum	4	1	6	As per Schedule C	1	1
Van accessible parking	0	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bicycle parking stalls – minimum						
Long Term	13 (subject to revisions)	8	16 (additional functionality regulations also apply)	8	existing	8
Oversized Long Term	0	n/a	15		n/a	n/a
Electrified stalls	0	n/a	50%	0	n/a	n/a
Short Term	6	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a
Accessory Building (bike sheds) -						
Location	Side**	Rear Yard	Rear Yard	n/a	existing	n/a

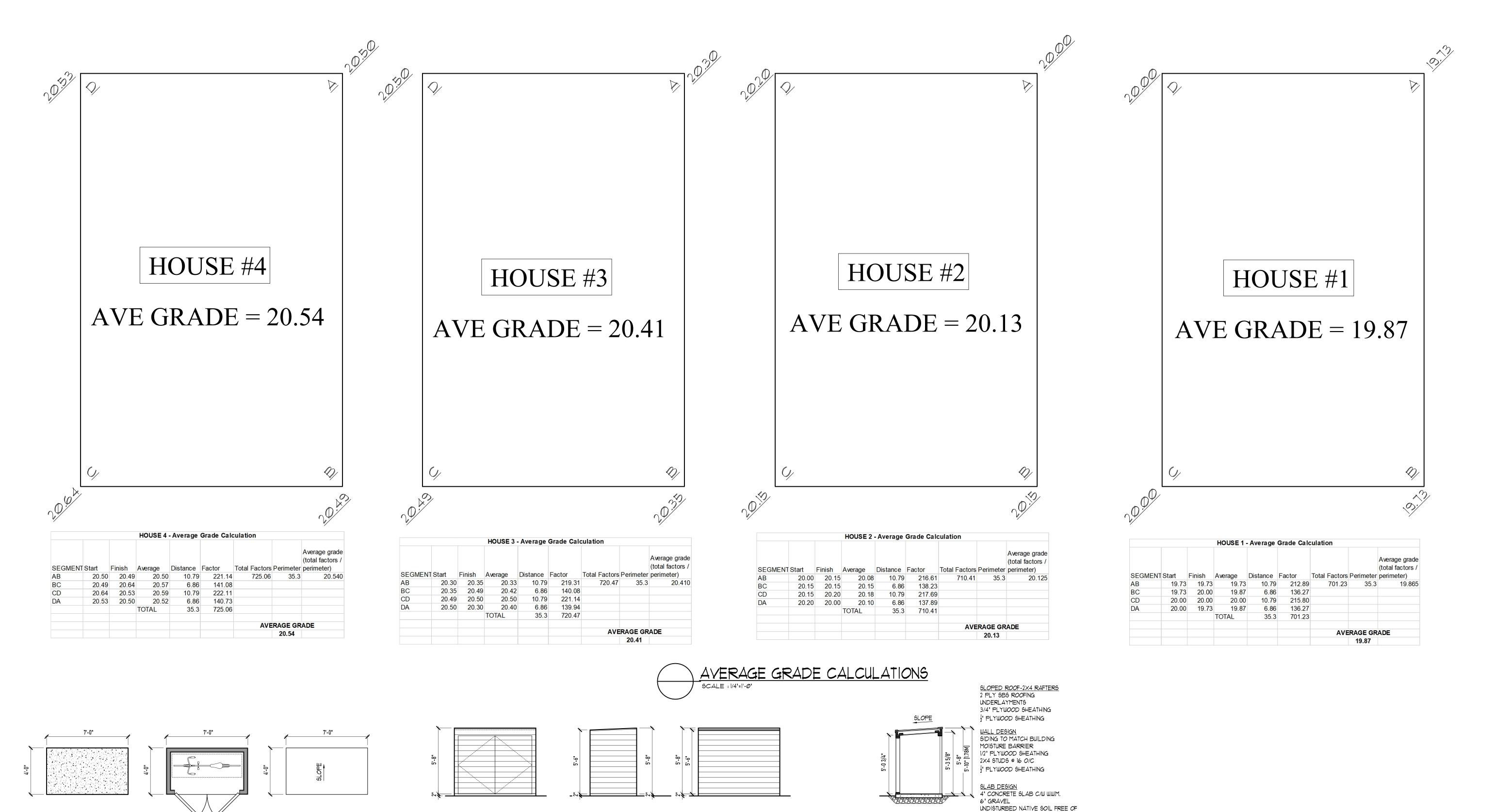
Zoning Criteria	Proposal- New Panhandle Lot	Zone Standard Schedule H  - Panhandle Lot Regulations	Zone Standard Schedule P  - Missing Middle Regulations	Zone- R2-61 (adjacent non- panhandle lot)	Proposal- Existing building	Existing Zone- R1-B
Separation space from main building	1.19**	2.4	2.4	37	existing	37











TYPICAL SHED SECTION

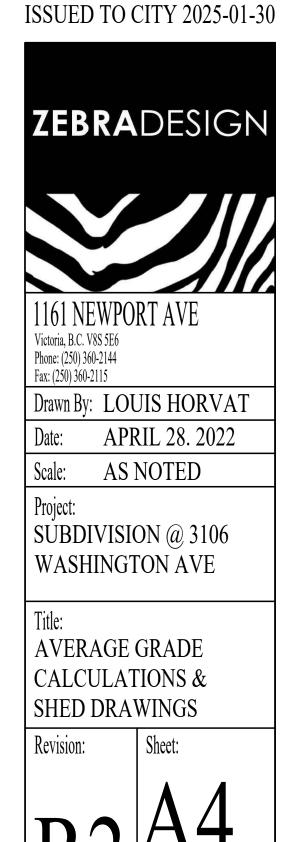
SCALE : 1/4"=1'-0"

TYPICAL SHED ELEVATIONS

SCALE : 1/4"=1'-0"

TYPICAL SHED PLANS

SCALE : 1/4"=1'-0"

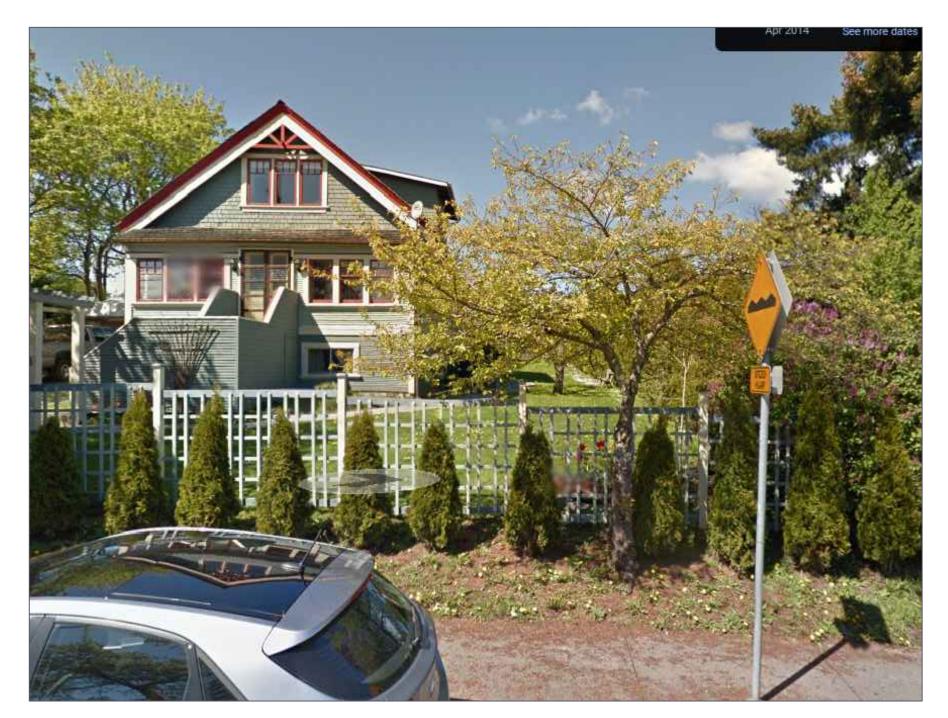






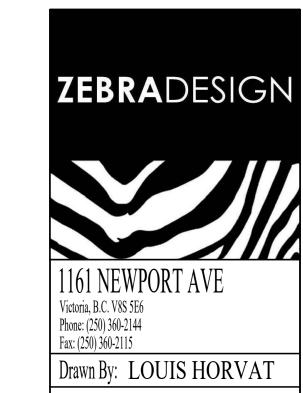












Date: APRIL 28. 2022

Scale: AS NOTED

Project: SUBDIVISION @ 3106 WASHINGTON AVE

Title: STREETSCAPE



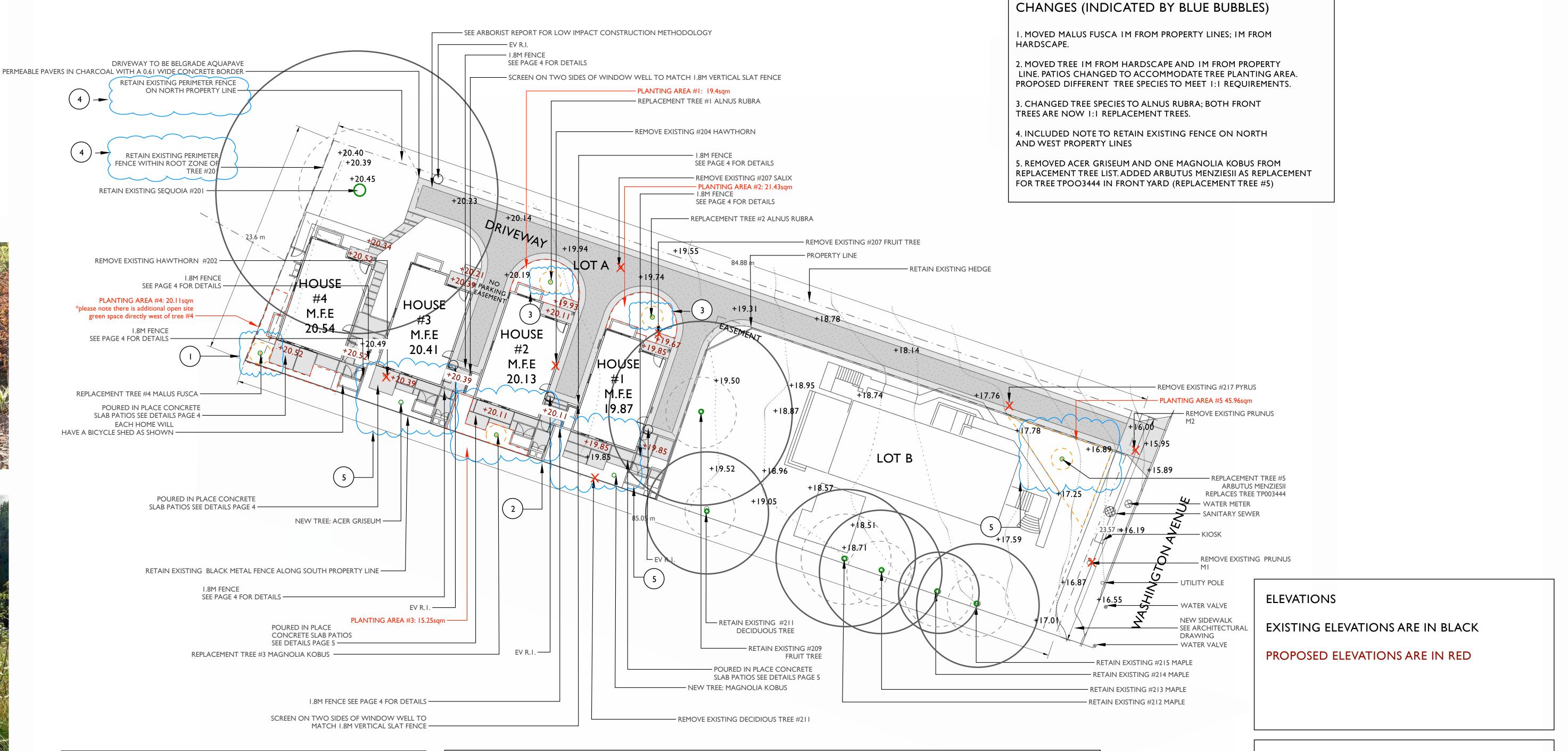
# SITE PLAN WITH BUBBLED CHANGES











LEGEND	
X	TREES TO BE REMOVED
	TREE TRUNK
	I METER RADIUS AROUND REPLACEMENT TREES
	PROTECTED ROOT ZONE
	CANOPY
*SEE ARBORIST FENCING	PLAN FOR TREE PROTECTION

				REPLACEMENT TRE	ES PROPOSED	SOIL VOLUME R			
PLANTING AREA ID	[=. [//()] [ [M] =		B.#SMALL	C. #MEDIUM	E.#SMALL	C. #MEDIUM	TOTAL		
		ON	SITE						
PLANTING AREA #1	19.4	1	19.4	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #2	21.43	1	21.43	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #3	15.25	1	15.25	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #4	20.11	1	20.11	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #5	45.96	1	45.96	0	1	0	15	15	

\*ALL TREES TO BE IRRIGATED



# PROJECT TITLE #

PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN for DANIELLE AND TOD BUCHANAN 3 I 06 WASHINGTON AVENUE, VICTORIA, BC

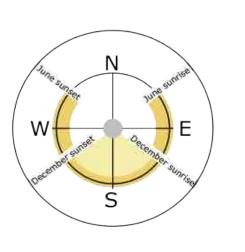
# PAGE TITLE #
SITE PLAN WITH BUBBLED CHANGES, PAGE ONE of SIX

## DATE ## JANUARY 12, 2023
Revised APRIL 25, 2023
Revised JUNE 20, 2023
Revised JULY 28, 2023

Revised NOVEMBER 3, 2023 Revised NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Revised JULY 1, 2024

# **SCALE** # 1:200



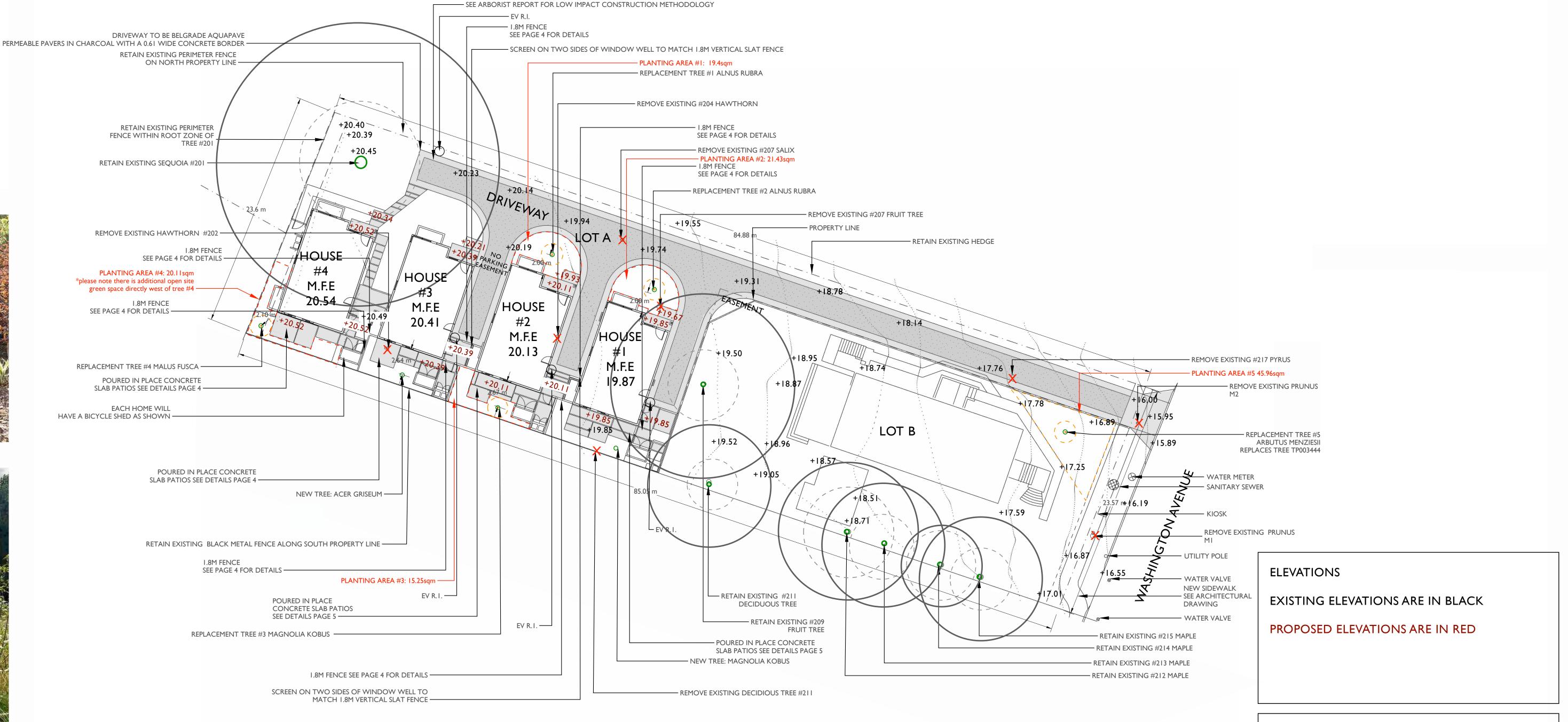
# SITE, GRADING, AND TREE RETENTION, REMOVAL, AND REPLACEMENT PLANS











LEGEND	
X	TREES TO BE REMOVED
	TREETRUNK
	I METER RADIUS AROUND REPLACEMENT TREES
	PROTECTED ROOT ZONE
	CANOPY
*SEE ARBORIST FENCING	PLAN FOR TREE PROTECTION

				REPLACEMENT TRE	ES PROPOSED	SOIL VOLUME REQUIRED (m3)			
PLANTING AREA ID	AREA (m2)	SOIL VOLUME MULTIPLIER	A. ESTIMATED SOIL VOLUME	B.#SMALL	C. #MEDIUM	E.#SMALL	E.#SMALL C. #MEDIUM		
		٥N	ISITE						
PLANTING AREA #1	19.4	1	19.4	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #2	21.43	1	21.43	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #3	15.25	1	15.25	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #4	20.11	1	20.11	0	1	0	15	15	
PLANTING AREA #5	45.96	1	45.96	0	1	0	15	15	

\*ALL TREES TO BE IRRIGATED

## DATE ::
| JANUARY 12, 2023 | Revised JAN. 29, 2025 |
| Revised APRIL 25, 2023 |
| Revised JUNE 20, 2023 |
| Revised JULY 28, 2023 |
| Revised NOVEMBER 3, 2023 |
| Revised NOVEMBER 16, 2023 |
| Revised JULY 1, 2024 |



**SCALE** 

Greenspace Designs

" PROJECT TITLE "

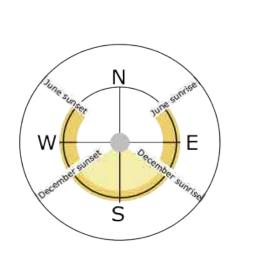
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PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN for DANIELLE AND TOD BUCHANAN

3 I 06 WASHINGTON AVENUE, VICTORIA, BC

Sustainable Landscape Design

SITE AND TREE REPLACEMENT PLAN, PAGE TWO of SIX



# LANDSCAPE PLAN 3X HA ----- □ ADIANTUM ALEUTICUM CLEMATIS ARMANDII 3X AC ——— — DICENTRA FORMOSA 3X LP4 ----- CORNUS SANGUINEA — 3X LN4 'MIDWINTER FIRE' L BLECHNUM SPICANT ARBUTUS MENZIESII — - 9X LU4 MAGNOLIA KOBUS — ACER GRISEUM — ----- 15X KM4 3X LU4 5X AR — SAGINA SUBULATA \_\_\_ 25X PC 10X HM — 6X PH retain existing sequoia — L DELPHINIUM MENZIESII 4X AM4 — 7X CA — 13X DA4 — - ERYTHRONIUM OREGONUM - SMILACINA RACEMOSA — 3X AA - 3X LN 2X BS4 — - KOLERIA MACRANTHA 5X AD4 — HOUSE **HOUSE HOUSE** HOUSE # I ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM ----4X PM — IX CS IOX SS — 5X PM ----ISX EO —— IX HP —— - LOMATIUM UTRICULATUM IX AG — IX CS —— 25X PC — 3X GS — IX HP — IX LO \_\_\_\_\_ 3X PM — 20X TG ----IX HP — 3X SM — 3X PM —— 12X EO ----IX AD — 3X AD ----MALUS FUSCA — - LONICERA PERICLYMENUM 'PEACHES AND CREAM' L ALLIUM ACUMINATUM L HEUCHERA MICRANTHA L DATHONIA CALIFORNICA L THUJA OCCIDENTALIS 'SMARAGD' — LOMATIUM NUDICAULE

FESTUCA ROMERI

L GAULTHERIA SHALLON

CAMASSIA LEICHTLINII

L DESCHAMPSIA CESPITOSA

☐ BERBERIS NERVOSA

POLYSTICHUM MUNITUM

— ARMERIA MARITIMA

#### PLANTING PLAN ABB. QTY. SIZE **BOTANICAL NAME COMMON NAME TREES** ACER GRISEUM PAPER BARK MAPLE ARBUTUS MENZIESII ARBUTUS (see tree plan for placement) $\mathsf{AM}$ RED ALDER **ALNUS RUBRA** KOBUS MAGNOLIA MK MAGNOLIA KOBUS PACIFIC CRABAPPLE MF MALUS FUSCA **SHRUBS** MIDWINTER FIRE RED TWIG DOGWOOD CORNUS SANGUINEA 'MIDWINTER FIRE' TO THUIA OCCIDENTALIS 'SMARAGD' S MARAGD ARBORVITAE PERENNIALS, BULBS, FERNS AND GRASSES YARROW **ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM** YARROW **ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM** AD ADIANTUM ALEUTICUM WESTERN MAIDENHAIR FERN AD4 ADIANTUM ALEUTICUM WESTERN MAIDENHAIR FERN AAALLIUM ACUMINATUM HOOKER'S ONION NODDING ONION **ALLIUM CERNUUM** SEA THRIFT $\mathsf{AR}$ ARMERIA MARITIMA DEER FERN BS **BLECHNUM SPICANT** BS4 **BLECHNUM SPICANT** DEER FERN CAMASSIA LEICTLINII CAMAS $\mathsf{CL}$ CALIFRONIA OAT GRASS DA DATHONIA CALIFORNICA DA4 CALIFRONIA OAT GRASS DATHONIA CALIFORNICA MENZIES' LARKSPUR DM **DELPHINIUM MENZIESII** MENZIES' LARKSPUR DM4 **DELPHINIUM MENZIESII** DC DESCHAMPSIA CESPITOSA TUFTED HAIR GRASS DC4 TUFTED HAIR GRASS DESCHAMPSIA CESPITOSA DF PACIFIC BLEEDING HEART DICENTRA FORMOSA **FAWN LILY** EO ERYTHRONIUM OREGONUM ROEMER'S FESCUE FR FESTUCA ROMERI ROEMER'S FESCUE FESTUCA ROMERI HELENIUM AUTUMNALE VAR. GRANDIFLORUM MOUNTAIN SNEEZEWEED KM KOLERIA MACRANTHA JUNE GRASS JUNE GRASS KM4 KOLERIA MACRANTHA LN LOMATIUM NUDICAULE BARESTEM DESERT-PARSLEY BARESTEM DESERT-PARSLEY LN4 LOMATIUM NUDICAULE SPRING GOLD LU LOMATIUM UTRICULATUM LOMATIUM UTRICULATUM SPRING GOLD LU4 LP LUPINUS POLYPHYLLUS LARGE-LEAF LUPIN LARGE-LEAF LUPIN LP4 LUPINUS POLYPHYLLUS PG YAMPAH PERIDERIDIA GAIRDNERI PRIMULA HENDERSONII SHOOTING STAR PH SWORD FERN PM POLYSTICHUM MUNITUM SWORD FERN POLYSTICHUM MUNITUM SMILACINA RACEMOSA SM FALSE SOLOMON'S SEAL **GROUNDCOVERS AND ANNUALS** BERBERIS NERVOSA CREEPING OREGON GRAPE CA **CERASTIUM ARVENSE** FIELD CHICKWEED GS **GAULTHERIA SHALLON** SALAL SALAL **GAULTHERIA SHALLON** CORAL BELLS HEUCHERA MICRANTHA PLECTRITIS CONGESTA SEABLUSH **IRISH MOSS** SAGINA SUBULATA TG TELLIMA GRANDIFLORA FOAM FLOWER **VINES** EVERGREEN CLEMATIS CLE CLEMATIS ARMANDII CLIMBING HYDRANGEA HYDRANGEA PETIOLARIS LO PEACHES AND CREAM HONEYSUCKLE LONICERA PERICLYMENUM 'PEACHES AND CREAM'



☐ PRIMULA HENDERSONII



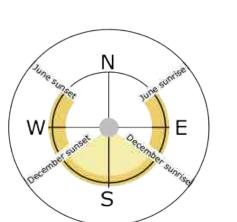
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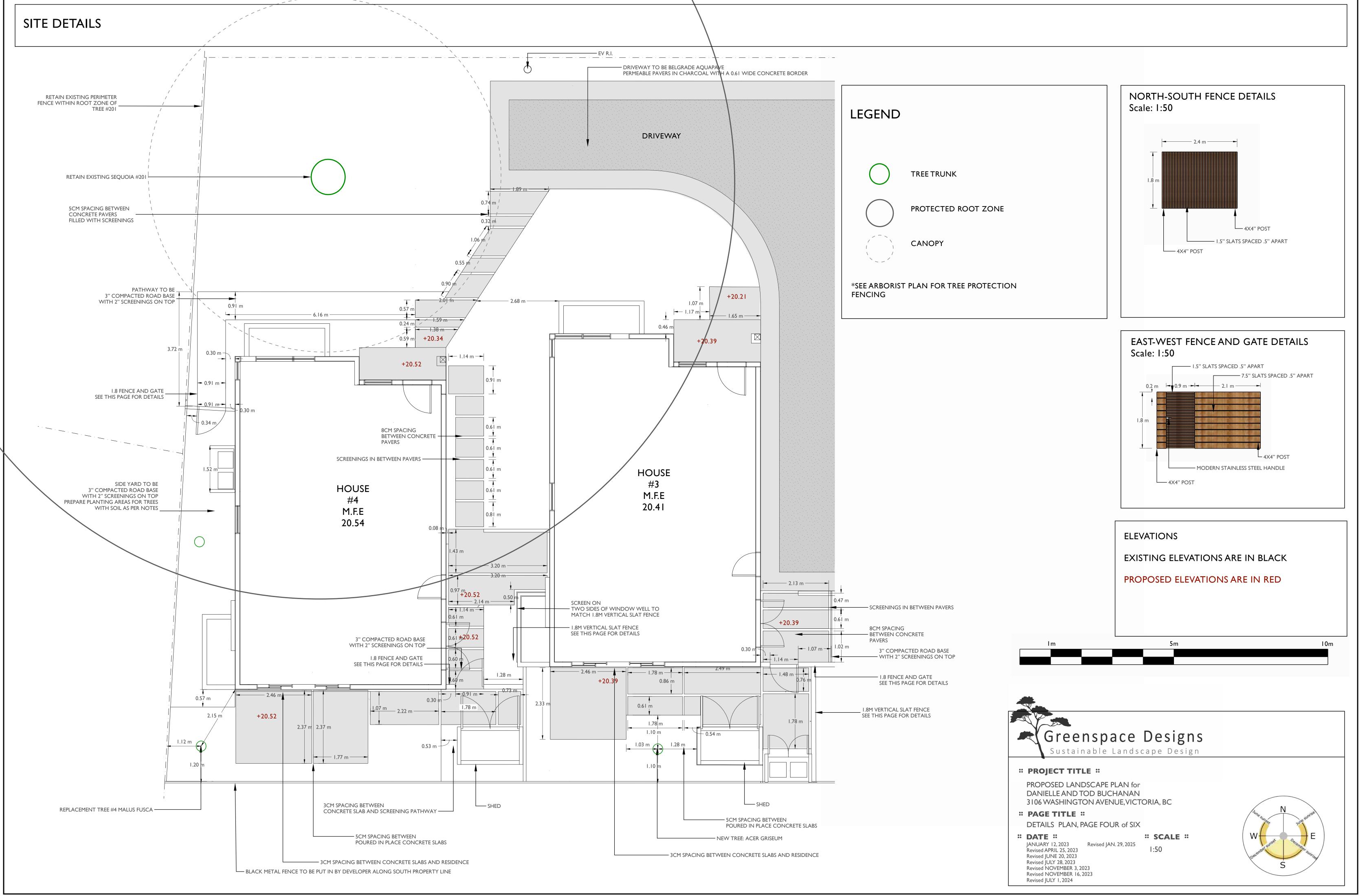
PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN for DANIELLE AND TOD BUCHANAN 3106 WASHINGTON AVENUE, VICTORIA, BC

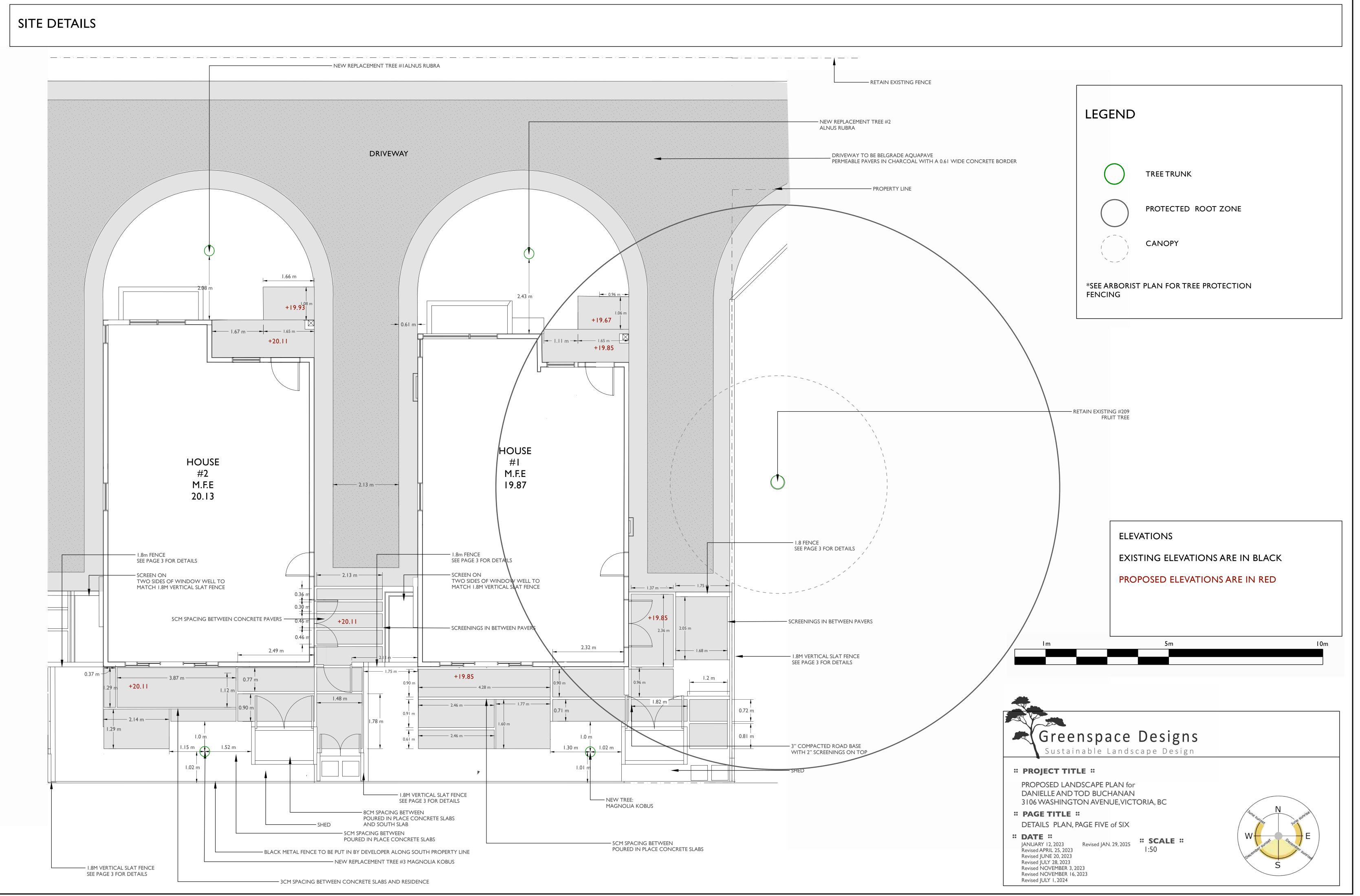
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Revised JULY 1, 2024

LANDSCAPE PLANTING PLAN, PAGE THREE of SIX **DATE** :: JANUARY 12, 2023 Revised JAN. 29, 2025 **SCALE** Revised APRIL 25, 2023 Revised JUNE 20, 2023 Revised JULY 28, 2023 Revised NOVEMBER 3, 2023 Revised NOVEMBER 16, 2023







# LANDSCAPE NOTES

### **OVERALL NOTES**

- . Plantings, landscape installation, and irrigations should all be installed in accordance with the BCLNA/BCSLA standard (2020)
- 2. Any plant substitutions shall be made in consultation with the landscape architect.
- 3. The Landscape and Irrigation Contractor shall determine the location of all underground services prior to the commencement of landscape work and shall be responsible for the repair of all damage caused by landscape work to the Owner's satisfaction.
- 4. All topsoil and plants shall conform to BCNTA / BCSLA specifications.
- 5. BCLNA/BCSLA standard (2020) is the guiding resource for all notes on this page

### **MATERIALS**

### **CAST-IN-PLACE CONCRETE**

- 1. Cast-in-place concrete may have a finish of trowel finish, broom finish, exposed aggregate, or parging. To be finished as specified on landscape plans.
- 2. Concrete should be reinforced with rebar.

### **PERMEABLE PAVERS**

Permeable pavers should be installed according to figures 12.2, 12.3, or 12.4.

# PERMEABLE PAVER DETAILS

FIGURE 12.2. PERMEABLE PAVEMENT WITH FULL INFILTRATION TO SOIL SUBGRADE

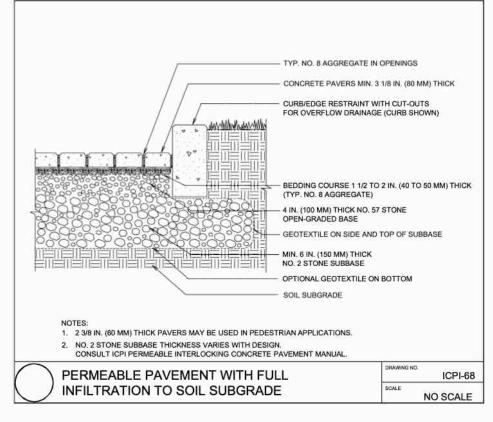


FIGURE 12.3. PERMEABLE PAVEMENT WITH PARTIAL INFILTRATION TO SOIL SUBGRADE

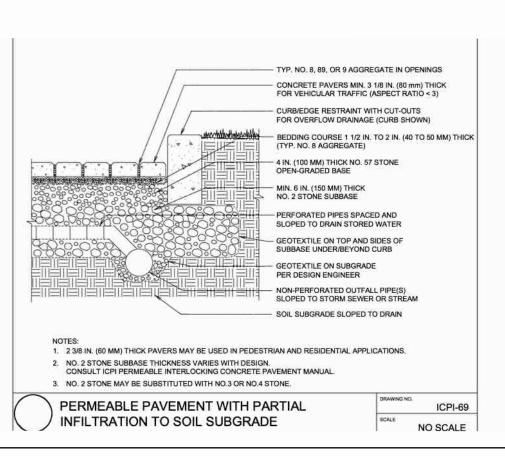
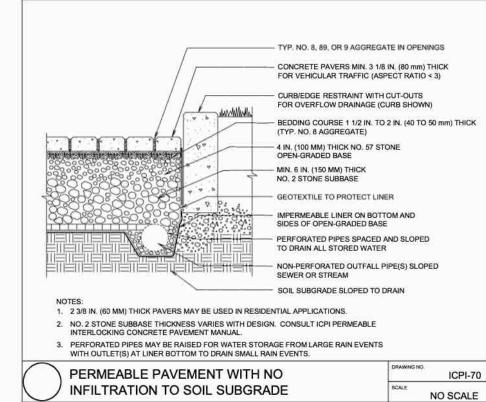


FIGURE 12.4. PERMEABLE PAVEMENT WITH NO INFILTRATION TO SOIL SUBGRADE



PLANTING DETAILS

ROOT CROWN TO BE AT FINISHED GRADE OR 25-50MM ABOVE GRADE **LEAF MULCH** - ROOTBALI

### **STOCKPILES**

- I. Site materials should be stockpiled separately from the growing medium to avoid contaminating the growing medium.
- 2. Ideally, the growing medium is delivered on the day of installation.
- 3. Soils, fill, sand, gravel, or any construction materials should not be stockpiled within the t critical protection zones.
- 4. Soil or subsoil should not be stockpiled in low areas to avoid erosion or water pooling.

### **TOPSOIL**

- On-site topsoil should be used if it meets the standards for a growing medium.
- 2. Topsoil should have a pH range of pH 5.5-7.5 and contain not less than 2 % Organic Matter [OM] by weight and a salt conductivity of less than 2.5 dS/m.
- 3. Both imported and on-site topsoil should be tested and amended before landscape work commences on-site by the contractor or soil supplier. Modification costs should be included in the overall budget.
- 4. Topsoil depths shall be as follows:
  - Trees 2m x 2m x 2m soil per tree shrubs 600 mm depth ground covers 150 mm depth

### **MULCH**

- I. All planted beds shall be covered with a 55 mm layer of high organic low-wood content mulch.
- 2. Mulch should be a minimum of 10cm (4in.) from the crown of any plant. It is never to be mounded up around the stem of the plant.
- 3. Mulch depths should be at most 10cm (4in.) around larger plants and 5cm (2in.) for smaller plants such as
- 4. Trees installed in lawns should have a mulch ring of 1m diameter that will be maintained for a minimum of 8 years.
- 5. Mulch is to be of a type suitable for the material planted.

### PLANTING.

- 1. All trees shall be secured with two 75 mm diameter x 1.8 m long round poles set 1m into the ground.
- 2. Plants determined to be dead or dying at the end of one year from the installation date shall be replaced by the Contractor at the Contractor's expense.
- Growing media settlement should be corrected prior to mulching.
- 4. Immediately after planting, trees shall be stabilized, ensuring that the tree's crown has free movement, but wind, snow loading, or human force will not disturb the buttress root system or cause the rootball to shift in the ground.
- 5. Trees may not need stabilization if the subsoil and growing medium are stable and can hold the rootball in place, and the rootball is solid and contained and shaped where it can resist shifting.
- 6. Planting debris and materials shall be removed promptly from the site.
- 7. Plants must be watered immediately after planting to the depth of their root systems.
- 8. The contractor is responsible for scheduling the delivery of plants to the site in conformance with the contract
- Plants should spend a minimal amount of time in the storage on site.

2X WIDTH OF ROOT BALL

### SOD

- I. All grass areas shall be sod. The sod shall be Anderson Sod Farm Easy Lawn 2000 or equivalent.
- 2. The finished grade should be smooth, firm against footprints, loose textured, and free of all stones, roots, and branches.
- 3. Areas with heavy compaction should have their surfaces loosened employing thorough scarification, discing, or harrowing to a minimum of 150mm (6in.) depth.
- 4. Sod must not be dropped or dumped from vehicles.
- 5. Sod should be protected during transportation and arrive at the site healthy.
- 6. If there is a delay in installation, the sod must be kept moist, cool, and protected against weather conditions until installation
- 7. Sod should be installed within 24 hours of delivery during the growing season.
- 8. After wet weather, sod needs to dry sufficiently before handing and installation to avoid tearing and damage.
- 9. Sod is sufficiently established when its roots grow into the underlying growing medium.
- 10. Sod lawns should not show visible seams.

### **CITY OF VICTORIA IRRIGATION NOTES**

Irrigation Systems on City property shall comply to City of Victoria Supplementary Division for review and approval 30 days prior to installation work. The following irrigation and sleeving inspections by Parks are required tsherbo@victoria.ca 48 hours prior to the required inspection time.

Irrigation Inspection Requirements.

- The irrigation system and sleeving inspection requirements can be found in Schedule C of the Victoria Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw No. 12-042.
- Irrigation Sleeving prior to backfilling\*
- Open trench Main Line and Pressure Test
- Open trench Lateral Line
- Irrigation system, Controller, Coverage test, Backflow Preventer Assembly Test
- Report required, Backflow Assembly is to have an inspection tag completed and attached.
- Please Note: Parks is now requesting that 100mm SDR 28 pipe be used for irrigation sleeving under hard surfaces. Installations where a 90-degree

## WATERING

- . Plants shall be monitored for moisture at delivery and watered as necessary until planting with on-site irrigation
- 2. Plants and soil moisture should be monitored during the first and second growing seasons for a sufficient irrigation schedule and to ensure that the plants are healthy with the irrigation setup. If the plants are wilting or showing stress due to water, there shall be an increase in watering frequency.
- 3. Watering should reach the depth of the root zone.
- 4. Irrigation schedules may be skipped if rainfall has penetrated the full depth of the root zone.
- 5. Soil moisture should be maintained at 50 to 100 percent field capacity.

## LANDSCAPE LIGHTING

I. Landscape lighting must adhere to the Canadian Electrical Code, British Columbia electrical and building codes, and Municipal by-laws regarding electrical, lighting, and light pollution.



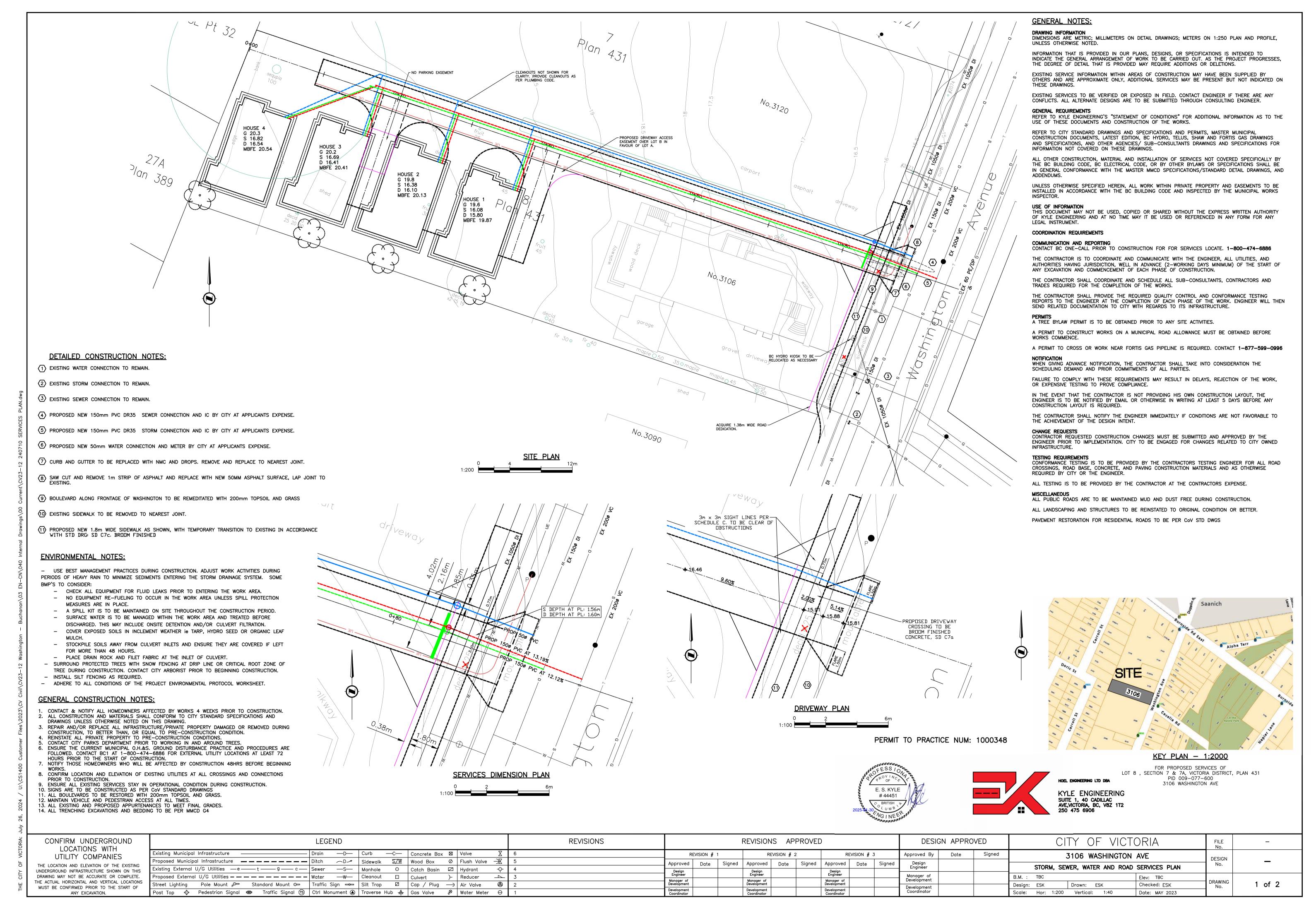
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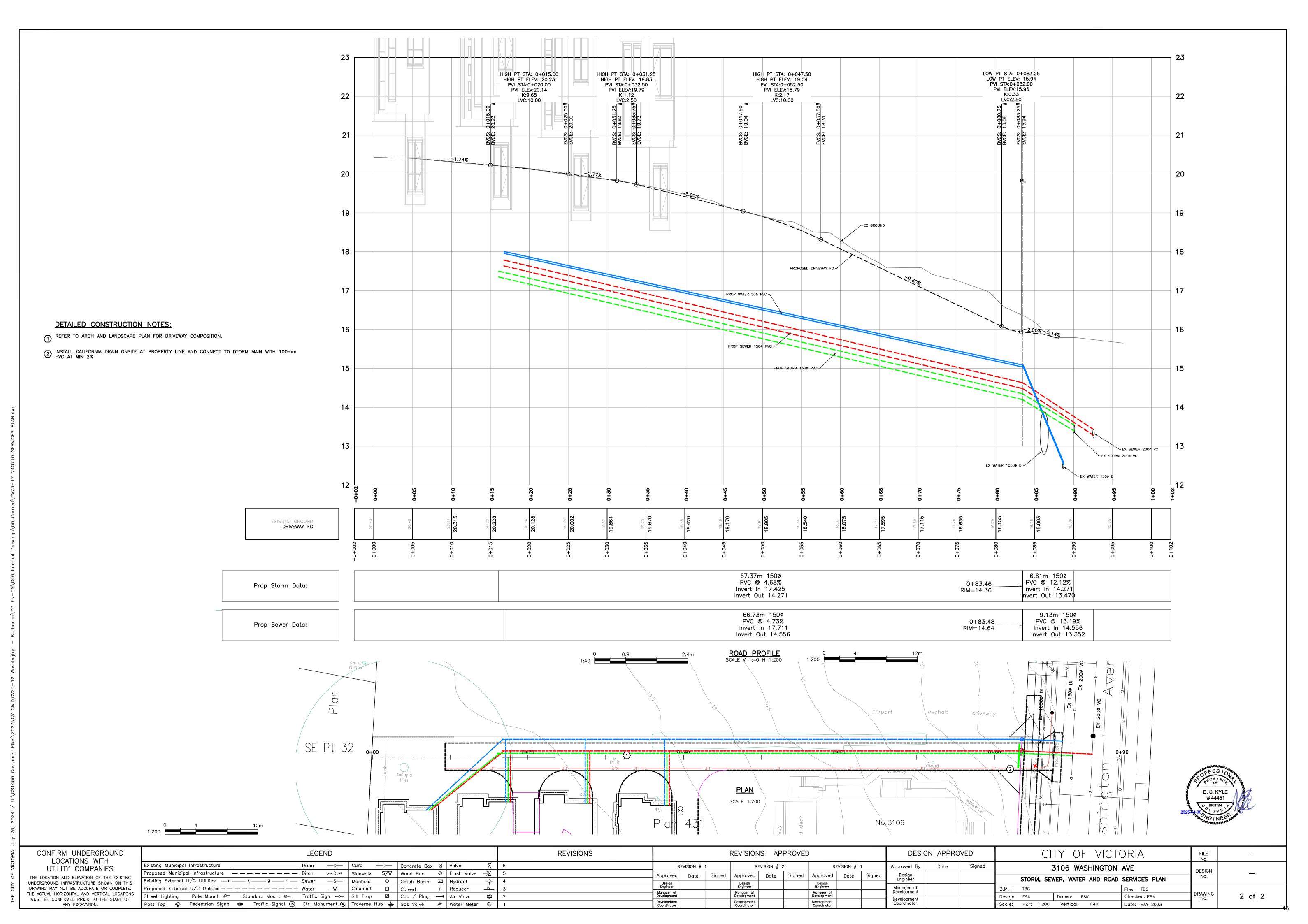
PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN for DANIELLE AND TOD BUCHANAN 3106 WASHINGTON AVENUE, VICTORIA, BC

**# PAGE TITLE #** 

LANDSCAPE NOTES, PAGE SIX of SIX

**::** DATE :: JANUARY 12, 2023 Revised JAN. 29, 2025 Revised APRIL 25, 2023 Revised JUNE 20, 2023 Revised JULY 28, 2023 Revised NOVEMBER 3, 2023 Revised NOVEMBER 16, 2023 Revised JULY 1, 2024





#### **Attention Mayor and Council**

### Highlights for Development Proposal at 3106 Washington Avenue

#### Gains

- Creating 4 new homes
- Creating 4 new rental suites
- Providing Public Amenity by upgrading public boulevard
- No existing homes need to be demolished or renters displaced to add new housing.
- Following the design of existing neighboring developments (cottage cluster) that have been approved by City Council (3103 and 3120 Washington Ave) and have proven a desirable alternative to townhomes or condos.
- Retaining our 1915 year old home to allow for ageing in place
- Excavating down to create a 3 level home to allow for low impact on neighbors and maintain privacy
- Maintaining Sequoia tree. Provided extensive Arborist reports, including root mapping, showing the tree and new homes can exist together
- Maintaining a 100 year old apple tree, from the original homestead of our property
- Have full support of our community and the Burnside Gorge Community Association.

#### **Design**

- Private courtyard green space designed for each new home
- Private green space for each rental unit
- 2 Bike storage spaces created for each unit. 1 for main home occupants, 1 for suite occupants
- All landscaping is thoughtfully designed and created around the concept of restoration. All plantings are native to British Columbia.
- High quality exterior finishes
- Permeable hardscaping surfaces and driveway
- Each home will be outfitted with fire preventing sprinkler systems

#### **Doric Corridor**

- Doric corridor currently has a through way and the transportation department can complete this connecter at any time.
- Potential for widening of the Doric Corridor when the parcel at 3091 Carrol Street is developed.

 For reasons of safety, the straightest line of site of this corridor is best for our neighborhood. Excessive curves and jogs in the design will create blind spots to allow for unsavory activities. Burnside Gorge has a high ratio of supportive housing which creates unique challenges for our community. Safety should be the number one priority when considering design.



D. Clark Arboriculture

2741 The Rise Victoria B.C. V8T-3T4
(250)208-1568
clarkarbor@gmail.com
www.dclarkarboriculture.com
Certified Arborist PN-6523A
TRA Qualified

Arborist Report for Development Purposes
Re: Proposed Rezoning, Development, and Construction

Site Location: 3106 Washington Ave., Victoria BC
Miche Hachey PN-9613A TRAQ
November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Revised: July 24th, 2024

Revised: January 30, 2025

#### January 30, 2025

For: Danielle and Todd Buchanan

3106 Washington Ave. Victoria BC V9A 1P6

Re. Proposed Rezoning, Development, and Construction-3106 Washington Ave.

#### 1.0 Scope of Work

D. Clark Arboriculture has been retained by Danielle and Todd Buchanan to provide comments on trees impacted by a potential rezoning, development, and construction of four homes and amenities, and a Tree Protection Plan for the property at 3106 Washington Ave. as per the requirements of the City of Victoria.

#### 2.0 Executive Summary

3106 Washington Ave. Tree Impact Summary										
TREE STATUS	# of Trees # of Trees to be Removed # of Replacement Trees # of Existing Replacement Tr									
On-site trees	10	4	0	0						
Off-site Trees	0	0	0	0						
Municipal Trees	2	2	TBD	N/A						
TOTAL	12	6	0	0						

<sup>\*</sup>Refer to Section 8.0 Replacement Trees and Tree Minimum

The construction of (4) new residences will impact the Protected Root Zone (PRZ) of (10) on-site trees. A total of (4) on-site trees and (2) municipal-owned trees will require removal to accommodate the proposed development and construction activities. One dead tree (#212) was removed under permit from the municipality in October 2024. It's required replacement is being shown on submitted landscape plans but has not been included in the replacement table at the end of this report. Tree #201 has undergone additional assessments that are summarised in a separate report by Ryan Senechal, dated January 30, 2025.

Trees identified as to be retained in this report require tree protection measures including tree protection fencing, root zone armoring and supervision of activities in the protected root zone of the trees. The project can proceed following the recommendations in this report.

#### 3.0 Introduction and Methodology

We (Darryl Clark and Miche Hachey) visited the site on December 13, 2022, to perform an assessment of trees on-property and off-property that will be impacted by proposed development. A follow-up impact assessment was conducted by colleague Ryan Senechal on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. A design provided by our client indicates (4) new homes to be constructed with site servicing, paved accesses, and landscaping. Site conditions surrounding affected trees were favorable.

This report was completed on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. Revisions to this report were completed July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and January 30, 2025.

#### Tasks performed include:

An aerial site map was marked indicating tree locations.

- A visual inspection of (11) on-site trees, and (2) municipal-owned trees were conducted, and notes were collected on health and structural condition.
- On-site trees were tagged using numerically stamped aluminum discs.
- Photos were taken to document the site.
- Tree height was measured to the nearest meter with a Trupulse 200 Laser Rangefinder. Canopy width was estimated to the widest point. Diameters were measured with a fabric tape.
- A Tree Survey, Tree Management Plan, and a supplementary Impact Assessment for Tree #201 dated been completed alongside this report.

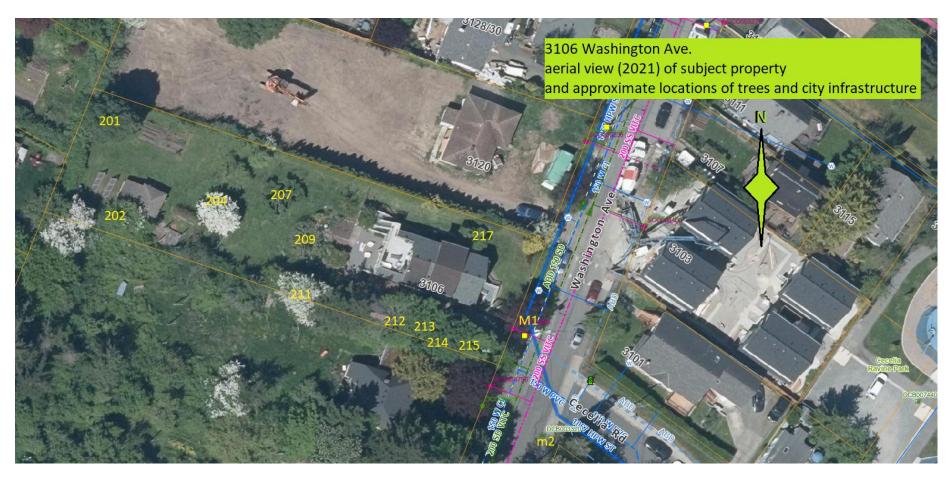


Figure 1- Victoria GIS 2021 Ortho imagery. Approximate tree locations.

### 4.0 Tree Inventory

	3106 Washington Ave. Inventory of Trees										
#	Species	cm/DBH	Height/m	Spread	PRZ/m	Structure	Health	Bylaw protected	Retain/Remove	Reason for Removal	Notes
201	Sequoiadendron giganteum	116	16	12	14	Good	Good	Yes	Retain		
202	Crataegus oxycantha	56	5	6	7	Poor	Good	Yes	Remove	Building footprint for #3	Multi stem, 22, 15, 19
204	Crataegus oxycantha	47	7	6	6	Fair	Fair	Yes	Remove	Building footprint for #2	Multi-Stem 30,17
207	Malus spp.	49	4	8	6	Fair	Fair	Yes	Remove	Building footprint for #1	
209	Malus spp.	72	5	7	9	Fair	Fair	Yes	Retain		Multi-stem 29,21,22
211	Crataegus oxycantha	54	8	5	6	Poor	Fair	Yes	Retain		Multi-Stem 30,24
212	Acer macrophyllum	62	16	9	7	Poor	Poor	Yes	Removed		Dead tops, 15cm in size, included stem. Removed under permit
213	Acer macrophyllum	50	15	6	6	Poor	Fair	Yes	Retain		
214	Acer macrophyllum	35	15	7	4	Fair	Fair	Yes	Retain		
215	Acer macrophyllum	53	15	6	6	Poor	Fair	Yes	Retain		Large Cavity at 2m, 12cm opening
217	Pyrus spp.	58	6	4	7	Fair	Fair	Yes	Remove	easement driveway	Multi-Stem 16,19,23
M1	Prunus cerasifera	31	9	7	4	Fair	Good	Municipal	Remove	SW renewal (engineering)	Growing into service wires. city inventory tree #28555
M2	Prunus avium spp.	26	3	4	3	Fair	Fair	Municipal	Remove	easement driveway	city inventory tree #28556

DBH-Diameter at Breast Height. Measured at 1.4m from the point of germination. Where the tree is multi-stemmed at 1.4m, the DBH shall be considered 100% of the three largest stems, rounded to the nearest cm. PRZ-Protected Root Zone. The PRZ shall be considered 12x the DBH, rounded to the nearest whole meter

#### 5.0 Site Description

3106 Washington Avenue is a residential lot with a house near the frontage on the southeasterly aspect and a backyard to the northwesterly that is mostly lawn and a handful of trees. The lot slopes gently to the southeast and generally maintained. The impacted trees are mature and in generally fair condition, with average trunk taper and an average vigour and vitality. The lot is large and long. The properties to the north and south has recently been redeveloped with infill housing.

#### **6.0 Tree Removal Requirements**

#### **6.1 Municipal-owned trees**

- M1 will require removal to accommodate sidewalk improvements required by the municipality.
- M2 will require removal to accommodate site servicing and driveway access.

#### 6.2 On-property trees

- Trees #202, 204, and 207 will require removal due to anticipated development conflicts with house footprints.
- Tree #217 will require removal to accommodate site servicing and driveway access.

#### 7.0 Tree Protection Plan

#### 7.1 Role of the Project Arborist

- 7.1.1. No aspect of this Tree Protection Plan will be amended in whole or in part without the permission of the Project Arborist.
- 7.1.2. Any amendments to the plan must be documented in memorandums to the Municipality and the Developer.
- 7.1.3. A site meeting including the Project Arborist, Developer, project supervisor, and any other related parties to review the tree protection plan will be held at the beginning of the project.
- 7.1.4. The Project Arborist must approve all tree protection measures before excavation begins in or near areas defined as Protected Root Zone on the Tree Management Plan.
- 7.1.5. The Project Arborist is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of this plan, including violations, are documented in memorandums to the Municipality and the Developer.

#### 7.2 Tree Protection Measures

7.2.1. Fencing for Protected Root Zones<sup>1</sup> will be installed as per the location indicated on the Tree Management Plan (TMP).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Matheny et al. (2023). Managing Tree During Site Development and Construction: Best Management Practices,

Third Edition

- 7.2.2. Fencing for the TPZ must be either securely anchored 2x4 posts and framing, paneled with securely affixed orange snow fence or plywood, or continuous temporary job site fencing (metal) secured with baling wire or zip ties. Fencing will incorporate highly visible signs that include "TREE PROTECTION AREA- NO ENTRY" (See appendix for an example).
- 7.2.3. The area inside fenced TPZs is off-limits to workers, equipment, and storage of materials. Areas outside the tree protection fence but still within the Protected Root Zone (PRZ) may be left open for access, as work areas and for storage of materials. These areas will be protected by root zone armoring consisting of either 3/4" plywood or a minimum of 20 centimeters of coarse wood chips (see Tree Management Plan for locations of each).
- 7.2.4. Tree protection measures will remain in place for the duration of the project unless they are amended and documented by the Project Arborist.
- 7.2.5. Tree protection measures will not be amended in any way without approval from the Project Arborist. Any additional tree protection measures will be documented in a memo to the Client and Municipality.
- 7.2.6. Work inside the established TPZ of any retained tree identified in this plan for any reason will take place under the supervision of the Project Arborist or their designate. Root disturbance and injury mitigation techniques may be specified by the Project Arborist including, but not limited to the use of a hydro-vac or Airspade® or digging using hand tools to expose roots for inspection.
- 7.2.7. For excavation activities using an excavator, the operator will work radially inward toward the tree. The excavator will remove the soil incrementally with a non-toothed shovel allowing any exposed roots to be pruned to an acceptable standard by the Project Arborist. Exposed roots that are to remain exposed for any duration outside of the day of excavation are to be covered with a layer of burlap and kept damp for the duration of the project. A memo to summarize these activities will be provided to the Municipality and Developer once the activities are completed.
- 7.2.8. Any excavation of plant vegetation inside a PRZ of a retained tree using machinery must be supervised by the Project Arborist.
- 7.2.9. Any roots damaged or injured inside TPZs may prompt the requirement for a tree risk assessment to evaluate tree stability.

#### 7.3 General Requirements

<u>7.3.1.</u> Any pruning of protected trees will be performed by an ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) Certified Arborist, by industry-recognized best management practices<sup>2</sup>. On-site tree #201 will require pruning to accommodate the proposed driveway and proposed roofline of house #4.

A provided impact assessment written by colleague Ryan Senechal on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, section 3.4) Tree Allometry and Structural Condition states "A pruning plan to establish and maintain

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Lilly, S.J. et al. (2019) Best Management Practices: Pruning (Third Edition).

building and driveway clearance should establish a lowest permanent branch. This can be targeted at the height where branching growth habit shifts from downward to horizontal growth (laser measured at 5.5m height). Pruning will use a combination of reduction and removal pruning methods targeting the most vigorous and elongated branches and retaining subordinate branches."

The proposed height for house #4 is 1.78m. It is recommended that the lowest permanent branch be establish at 3-4m height depending on branch growth in the proximity, and suitable branches present for pruning.

- <u>7.3.2.</u> Equipment traffic in and out of the site is anticipated to utilize the northern portion of the property. Due to limited access, foot traffic is naturally restricted to utilizing primarily the northern side of the residence for access to the backyard (west). In areas of high foot and machinery traffic that occurs in the PRZ of trees, root zone armoring will be employed.
- <u>7.3.3.</u> Material staging and storage will be in a location that does not encroach on the PRZ of any retained trees.
- <u>7.3.4.</u> Root zone armoring will be used in areas of high traffic that are within PRZ's of retained trees.

#### 7.4 Construction Activities and Tree Protection Measures

#### 7.4.1 Tree Stump and Vegetation Removal

Excavation for the removal of tree stumps #202 and 207 are anticipated to encroach on the PRZ of trees #201 and 209. Supervision will be required for the removal of these tree stumps as they share PRZ's with retained on-site trees.

To minimize root damage and soil compaction from occurring, mitigation recommendations include the use of root zone armoring for foot and machinery access that occurs through PRZ's of trees that do not have TPZ fencing enclosing the entire extent of their PRZ's. The Project Arborist will supervise all noted stump removals and provide root pruning if deemed necessary.

#### 7.4.2. Excavation for Proposed Houses

Excavation for the foundations of houses #1 and #4 will require supervision where it impacts the PRZ's of on-site trees #201, 209, and 211.

To minimize root damage and soil compaction from occurring, mitigation recommendations include the use of root zone armoring for frequent foot access that occurs through PRZ's of trees that do not have TPZ fencing enclosing the entire extent of their PRZ's. The Project Arborist will supervise all excavation activities where they have the potential to disrupt the PRZ's of retained trees, the Project Arborist will conduct root pruning if deemed necessary.

Final depth of foundation and cut-slope requirements will be provided to the project arborist for review before the start of excavation. Amendments or revisions to this plan due to unanticipated changes will be documented in a memo to the developer and the municipality for approval before the start of excavation.

<u>7.4.3.</u> Excavation for the Installation of Civil Services- Water, Storm and Sewer The installation of services is anticipated to be underneath the footprint of the new driveway and will continue along the northern portion of the property and will veer to each individual residence. The installation of these services is anticipated to encroach on the PRZ of on-site tree #201.

To minimize root damage and soil compaction from occurring, mitigation recommendations include the use of root zone armoring for frequent foot access that occurs through PRZ's of trees that do not have TPZ fencing enclosing the entire extent of their PRZ's. The Project Arborist will supervise all excavation activities where they have the potential to disrupt the PRZ's of retained trees, the Project Arborist will conduct root pruning if deemed necessary.

Based on the proximity to tree #201, to aid in the retention of roots and lessen impacts. The use of an Hydrovac or Airspade will be utilized for the trenching of service lines where it is within the PRZ of tree #201.

Revisions to the report may be required to document any changes to these services.

7.4.4. Landscaping Activities- Installation of Proposed Driveway

A driveway is proposed on the northern section of the property, a provided landscape plan indicates the usage of permeable pavers. Installation of the driveway is anticipated to encroach on the PRZ of tree #201.

Exploratory work may be undertaken prior to installation to determine significant roots (>10 cm Ø) locations and tree impacts.

Final driveway layouts will be provided to the Project Arborist for review before the start of construction. Specific cut depths will be determined at the time of installation and all installation details and impact summary will be compiled in a memo to the Municipality and the client.

Alternative techniques for paving will be employed including the use of geotextile load bearing fabric, and a detail of the paving expectations can be found noted in *Figure 1*, the Tree Management Plan and the Landscape Plan.

The expectations for landscaping are the same as for construction. All tree protection measures outlined in the report and on the Tree Management Plan are expected to remain in place, and any changes will be approved by the project arborist with amendments to the report and plan documented in correspondence to the city and the developer.

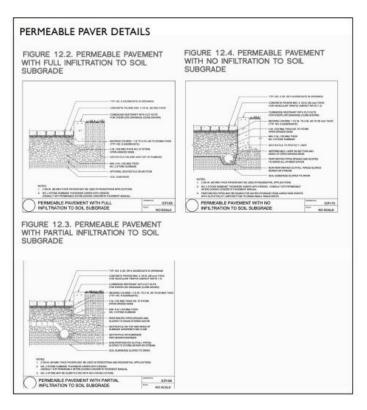


Figure 1) Proposed driveway details provided by Greenspace Design on the Landscape Plan.

#### 8.0 Replacement Trees and Tree Minimum

The City of Victoria's Tree Protection Bylaw No. 21-035 section 21 (1) states that properties in development-related applications must ensure that the lot will achieve the on-site tree minimum. The tree minimum for this lot based on a total area of ~1007m2 is (5) trees. (6) protected trees are to be retained. Tree #201 is considered a "specimen tree" under "Schedule C" of the bylaw and is counted as (3) trees. The Landscape Plan proposes (4) trees that equal 1:1 replacement. The retained trees in combination with the proposed planted trees reaches a greater number of trees than the expected minimum on a site this size.

		count	Multiplier	TOTAL						
	onsite min.replacement req.									
Α	protected trees removed	4	x1	4						
В	replacement trees proposed part 1	4	X1	4						
С	replacement trees proposed part 2	0	X0.5	0						
D	replacement trees proposed part 3	0	X1	0						
Е	total replacement trees proposed (B+C+D)			4						
F	onsite replacement tree deficit (A-E)		0							
	onsite tree min. req.									
G	tree minimum on lot			5						
Н	protected trees retained	6	X1	6						

-1	specemin trees retained	1	Х3	3					
J	trees per lot deficit (G-(B+C+H+I))		0						
	offsite min. replacement req.								
K	protected trees removed	0	X1	0					
L	replacement trees proposed (part 1 or 3)	0	X1	0					
М	replacement trees proposed (part 2)	0	X0.5	0					
N	total replacement trees proposed (L+M)								
0	offsite replacement tree deficit (K-N)								
	cash-in-lieu req.								
Р	onsite trees proposed for cash-in-lieu (greater of F or J)								
Q	offsite trees proposed for cash-in-lieu (O)								
R	cash-in-lieu proposed ((P+Q)x \$2000.00)			\$-					

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these trees.

Should any issues arise from this report, I am available to discuss them by phone or email. Regards,

Darryl Clark Certified Arborist PN-6523A TRAQ

#### Insured by:

Milmine Insurance 301 Highway #8, Unit #1, Stoney Creek Ont. L8G 1E5 Justin Bizier — <u>jbizier@vergeinsurance.com</u> — 905-664-2911

Expires on: 2025/08/01

#### **Disclosure Statement**

An arborist uses their education, training and experience to assess trees and provide prescriptions that promote the health and wellbeing and reduce the risk of trees.

The prescriptions set forth in this report are based on the documented indicators of risk and health noted at the time of the assessment and are not a guarantee against all potential symptoms and risks.

Trees are living organisms and subject to continual change from a variety of factors including but not limited to disease, weather and climate, and age. Disease and structural defects may be concealed in the tree or underground. It is impossible for an arborist to detect every flaw or condition that may result in failure, and an arborist cannot guarantee that a tree will remain healthy and free of risk.

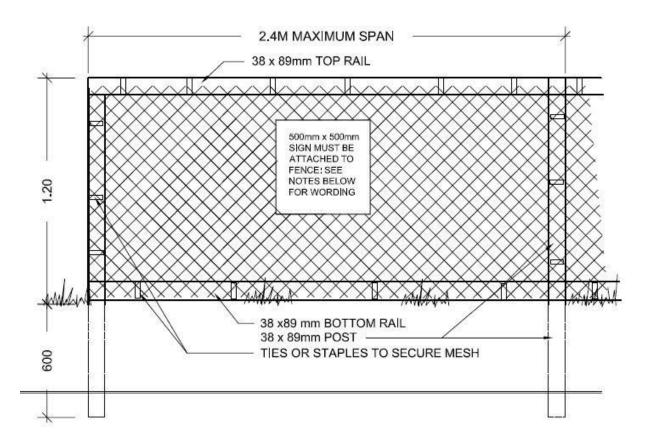
To live near trees is to accept some degree of risk. The only way to eliminate the risks associated with trees is to eliminate all trees.

#### **Assumptions and Limiting Conditions**

• Altering this report in any way invalidates the entire report.

- The use of this report is intended solely for the addressed client and may not be used or reproduced for any reason without the consent of the author.
- The information in this report is limited to only the items that were examined and reported on and reflect only the visual conditions at the time of the assessment.
- The inspection is limited to a visual examination of the accessible components without dissection, excavation or probing, unless otherwise reported. There is no guarantee that problems or deficiencies may not arise in the future, or that they may have been present at the time of the assessment.
- Sketches, notes, diagrams, etc. included in this report are intended as visual aids, are not considered to scale except where noted and should not be considered surveys or architectural drawings.
- All information provided by owners and or managers of the property in question, or by agents acting on behalf of the aforementioned is assumed to be correct and submitted in good faith. The consultant cannot be responsible or guarantee the accuracy of information provided by others.
- It is assumed that the property is not in violation of any codes, covenants, ordinances or any other governmental regulations.
- The consultant shall not be required to attend court or give testimony unless subsequent contractual arrangements are made.
- The report and any values within are the opinion of the consultant, and fees collected are in no way contingent on the reporting of a specified value, a stipulated result, the occurrence of a subsequent event, or any finding to be reported.

### **Appendix A**



#### TREE PROTECTION FENCING

#### **Tree Protection Fencing Specifications:**

- 1. The fence will be constructed using 38 x 89 mm (2" x 4") wood frame:
  - Top, Bottom and Posts. In rocky areas, metal posts (t-bar or rebar) drilled into rock will be accepted.
  - Use orange snow fencing mesh and secure to the wood frame with "zip" ties or galvanized staples. Painted plywood or galvanized fencing may be used in place of snow fence mesh.
- 2. Attach a roughly 500 mm x 500 mm sign with the following wording: **TREE PROTECTION AREA- NO ENTRY**. This sign must be affixed on every fence face or at least every 10 linear metres.





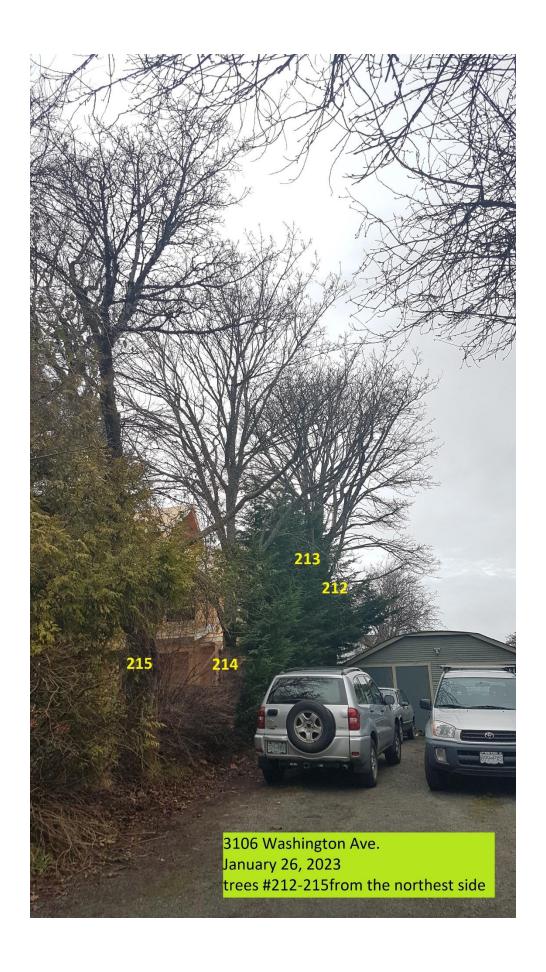


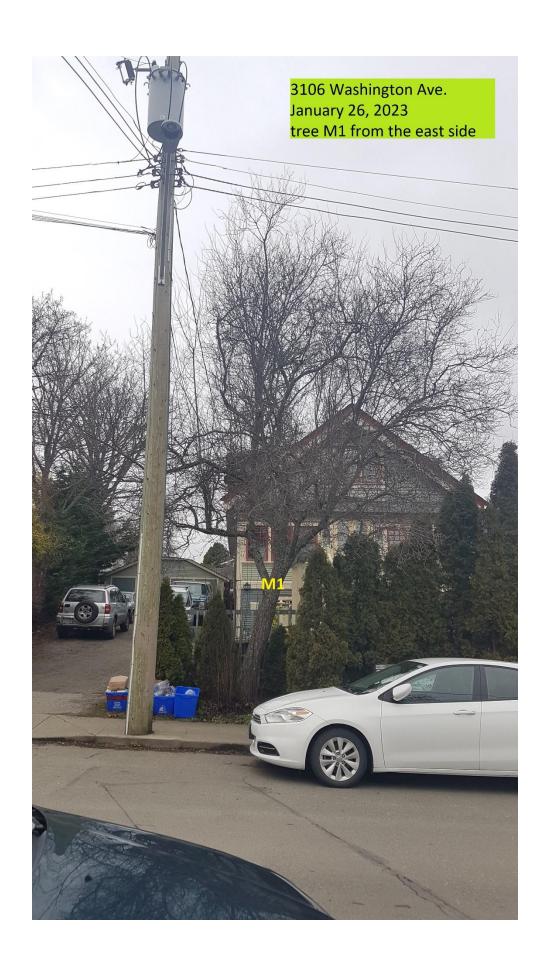




3106 Washington Ave. January 26, 2023 tree #211 from the north side











D. Clark Arboriculture 2741 The Rise Victoria B.C. V8T-3T4 (250)474-1552 (250)208-1568 clarkarbor@gmail.com www.dclarkarboriculture.com

Arborist Impact Assessment and Root Mapping
Re: Proposed Rezoning, Development, and Construction
at 3106 Washington Ave., Victoria, BC



Author: Ryan Senechal MUFL, ISA TRAQ/ON-1272AT, BC WDTA May  $9^{\text{th}}$ , 2024

Revised: January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025

May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Revised January 29, 2025

For Danielle and Todd Buchanan 3106 Washington Ave. Victoria BC V9A 1P6 Re. Arborist Impact Assessment at 3106 Washington Ave.

#### 1.0 Scope of Work

D. Clark Arboriculture has been retained by Danielle and Todd Buchanan to review impacts to Sequoia tree #201 and to provide recommendations relating to the proposed placement and size of "House #4". This investigation was conducted in response to review comments provided to our client from City of Victoria Parks on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

- An initial site visit was completed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 to observe and document tree #201, the soil texture and moisture, and the general conditions of the site.
- Exploratory excavation was completed on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- Trench locations, root locations, and root sizes were collected and documented on January 29<sup>th</sup>,
   2025

#### **Summary**

A site visit (May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024) and additional background gathered have informed recommendations provided in the Arborist Impact Assessment report produced on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. This assignment was intended to determine if tree #201 was suitable to be retained relative to House #4's proposed location and dimensions as submitted (Site Plans, Zebra Designs 2022). The subject Sequoia's species profile, the species tolerance to construction and pruning, the present growing conditions, and current tree vitality have all been evaluated. A revision to the Arborist Impact Assessment report (May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024) was produced following exploratory excavation (i.e., root mapping) that was completed on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Trenching using pneumatic soil excavation (i.e., AirSpade®) at the edge of excavation extents outlined in plans provided to us indicated that few large roots were present. This evidence gathered supports the previous Arborist Impact Assessment report findings that Sequoia tree #201 will be provided adequate soil and root system relative to the project designs as presently proposed. The implementation of a Specified Tree Protection Zone (STPZ) and low branch pruning will allow the Sequoia tree to be retained through development with tree health and tree stability being minimally affected. The tree health and tree stability outcomes are dependent on the implementation of arboricultural management guidelines outlined in the Arborist Report (D. Clark Arboriculture, revised July 24, 2024) and Tree Management Plan (D. Clark Arboriculture, revised July 23, 2024).

#### 2.0 Introduction and Methodology

A detailed assessment of one on-property *Sequoiadendron giganteum* tree was performed to evaluate tolerance to planned construction activities within a 12x multiplication factor Calculated Tree Protection Zone (TPZ). The basis for a 12x Calculated Tree Protection Zone (CTPZ) stems from a common starting point in development on small urban lots where arboricultural management will be applied. The factor of CTPZ is then refined based on the evidence gathered during the assessment of the tree, for example, species tolerance to root and branch injury, species growth habits, tree vitality, structural condition, tree allometry, and growing conditions are important factors to consider in determining what Calculated Tree Protection Zone is appropriate. House #3 and #4's planned footprints and shared driveway are situated inside of a 12x radius multiplication factor of the tree's diameter at breast height. This assignment investigated 1) the possibility of retaining the Sequoia tree through development based on designs provided to us, and 2) defining an appropriate CTPZ factor that balances the construction of housing with the long-term benefits potentially provided by retaining the tree.

Table 1. Inventory summary of tree #201.

#	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Spread (m)	TPZ (m)	Vitality Rating	Structural Condition Rating
201	Sequoiadendron giganteum	116	15	12	14	Good	Good

DBH: Diameter at Breast Height. Measured at 1.4m from the point of germination.

TPZ: Tree Protection Zone. The base TPZ shall be a radius of 12x the DBH.

#### 2.1 Methods

The assessment was based at ground level, and at height using a micro drone.

Pneumatic soil excavation was conducted using an AirSpade<sup>®</sup>.

Measurements were collected using a standard fabric diameter tape and a TruPulse 200L rangefinder.

Photographs were captured using a OnePlus 11 mobile phone (Hasselblad/Sony IMX890 24mm).

Geolocations of exploratory trenches and roots exposed were captured using Trimble Catalyst software (60 cm license) and a Trimble DA2 GNSS receiver. Accuracy was maintained at 60-70 cm.

Micro-drone (>250 g) operations were conducted in accordance with Transport Canada micro-drone requirements and flight information was logged in NAV Canada's NAV Drone app. The flight proceeded under Transport Canada micro-drone guidelines. The aerial survey flight did not exceed a flight level of 50 m.

#### 3.0 Impact Analysis

#### 3.1 Growing conditions

Investigations of the 12x TPZ surrounding tree #201 included a tree, adjacent vegetation, and soil survey. Surrounding vegetation was primarily turfgrass outside of the densely branched Sequoia with patches of Himalayan blackberry (established at the property fences on the north and west sides of the tree).

A soil auger was used to draw a 45 cm depth sample to determine relative texture and moisture during my site visit on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. I was able to easily reach 45 cm depth by taking two plugs with a Dutch auger, and the combined plugs were a sandy loam texture (*Figure 1-2*). Moisture through the sample was even. Rainfall for the month of April 2024 amounted to 29.2 mm<sup>1</sup> which is well below the 2000-2024 average of 77mm<sup>2</sup>.



Figure 1. Soil auger sample location (150° heading at dripline)



Figure 2. Soil texture and moisture sample

#### 3.2 Tree vitality

The tree's vitality rating (the tree's overall ability to tolerate stress) was rated at 90%. Live foliage is dense across the entire outer crown and it is growing vigorously vertically and laterally. A color difference was observed in the upper 50% of the crown, and this may be new growth emerging. Secondary growth has been rapid evidenced by the substantial trunk girth (1.76 m  $\varnothing$  at base) and relatively young age (Figure 3). Branch removal pruning on the lower trunk was visible and minor in size and quantity. Disturbance to the soil and root system occurred within the last 4 years related to a development at 3120 Washington Avenue: the extent of disturbance and injury is unknown.

Comparative analysis of Victoria Maps orthographic images from 2005 and 2023 suggests the age class of tree #201 is semi-mature, or a tree that has lived less than 40% of its expected lifespan). Using GIS

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Environment Canada. 2024. Historical Data – Climate.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Weather Network. 2024. Historical Monthly Averages.

measurements comparing the same images enables us to estimate that this tree was planted in the mid 1990s.



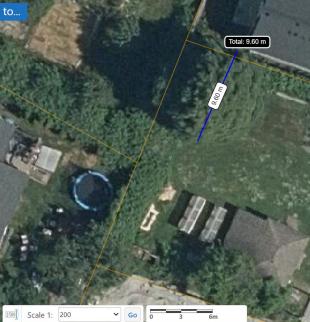


Figure 3. 2005 Ortho Imagery (Victoria Maps)

Figure 4. 2023 Ortho Imagery (Victoria Maps)

#### 3.3 Species profile

Giant Sequoia is well adapted for long periods of summer drought and demonstrates a high tolerance of degraded urban soils in the Greater Victoria Area. The species is listed as suitable as an urban tree for all but the driest sites in an anticipated future climate<sup>3</sup>. Mature trees are shade intolerant and form high crowns in forest stands where lower branches die from lack of light<sup>4</sup>. Open grown trees with available light on all sides are prone to form low branching, and this is the case with tree #201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Metro Vancouver. Urban Tree List for Metro Vancouver in a Changing Climate.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Habeck, R. J. 1992. *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.



Figure 5. Sequoia, 1505 Bywood Pl.



Figure 6. Sequoia, Saanich Peninsula Hospital

Where urban Sequoia trees' vitality is strong, tolerance to low branch pruning around conflicting infrastructure is high: Sequoiadendron has high resistance to decay fungi<sup>5</sup> and is an effective compartmentalizer of wounding. Numerous local examples of mature giant Sequoia in highly built-up areas demonstrate a tolerance for a range of pruning treatments as they mature around urban infrastructure and adapt around introduced infrastructure (Figures 5-8). Dozens of giant Sequoia have persisted through phases of private development and public infrastructure changes since turn of the early 1900's when they were introduced to the region<sup>6</sup> (Figures 5-8).



Figure 7. Sequoia, 250 Douglas st. (Google)



Figure 8. Sequoia, Campus Honda (Google)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Piirto, Douglas D. 1986. Wood of Giant Sequoia: Properties and Unique Characteristics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Chaster, G.H., Ross, D.W., Warren, W.H. 1988. Trees of Greater Victoria: A Heritage.

#### 3.4 Tree allometry and structural condition

The tree is relatively short (15 m) with a 12 m  $\varnothing$  symmetrical crown and substantial basal trunk buttressing (1.76 m  $\varnothing$ ). Root injuries (quantity of root loss or individual loss of large anchoring roots) should be minimized through the implementation of arboricultural guidance included in the Arborist Report and Tree Management Plan. Single stand-alone trees are the ideal tree retention opportunity through development because of uniform canopy and well-formed trunk taper<sup>7</sup>.

A pruning plan to establish and maintain building and driveway clearance should establish a lowest permanent branch. This can be targeted at the height where branching growth habit shifts from downward to horizontal growth (laser measured at 5.5m height). Pruning will use a combination of reduction and removal pruning methods targeting the most vigorous and elongated branches and retaining subordinate branches. This pruning will have a low impact to the tree's vitality rating as it is gradual and localized to 5 m height covering 33% of the radius of the tree. Pruning should be performed by an ISA Certified Arborist familiar with giant Sequoia, or a trainee arborist under the direct an ongoing supervision of an ISA Certified Arborist.

#### 3.5 Specified Tree Protection Zone (STPZ)

ISA Best Management Practices establish acceptable scenarios for a specified approach of CRZ multiplication factors where planned construction cannot be located beyond a preferred CRZ<sup>8</sup>. There are limitations on how much crown or root loss a tree can tolerate, and the field work conducted for this assignment was intended to investigate if a Specified Tree Protection Zone (STPZ) approach would be appropriate. Quantitative information is in short supply specific to tree speceies' response to construction impacts. Assigning species suitability ratings is a qualititative process based on consultant observations of tree response<sup>9</sup>. Sequoia's species tolerance to construction is suggested to be moderate (*Table 2*), however, personal observations and observations of local consulting arborist colleagues suggest Sequoia has a high tolerance of construction in the Greater Victoria area.

Table 2. Guidelines for calculating tree protection zone radius for trees in good condition (ISA Best Management Practices: Managing Trees During Site Development and Construction)

Species Tolerance to Construction Damage	Relative Tree Age	TPZ Multiplication Factor
Moderate	Semi-mature	8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Matheny, N., Clark, J.R. 1998. Trees and Development: A Technical Guide to Preservation of Trees During Land Development.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Matheny et al. 2023. Managing Trees During Site Development and Construction: Best Management Practices. Third Edition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Matheny, N., Clark, J.R. 1998. Trees and Development: A Technical Guide to Preservation of Trees During Land Development.

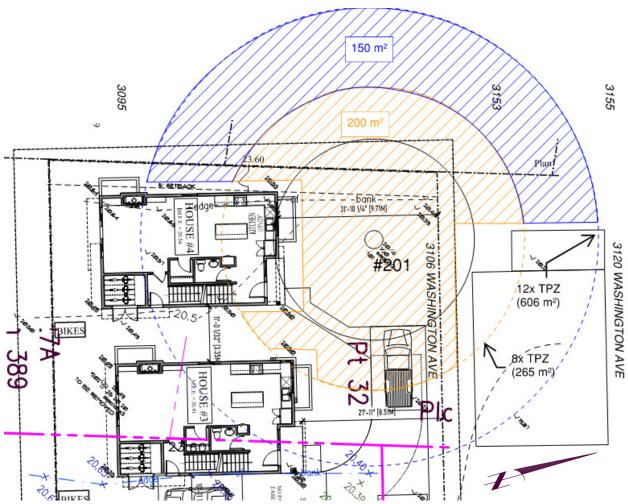


Figure 9. Specified Tree Protection Zone (hatched areas), tree #201

#### 3.6 Anticipated root injury and soil disturbance

Aerial imagery reviewed indicates that development disturbance occurred beginning in ~2021 on the adjacent lot (3120 Washington Ave.). The disturbance to tree #201 at 3120 Washington Ave. occurred inside of an 8x TPZ multiplication factor (headings 120°-30°) although background information on the extent of soil loss or root injury that might have occurred was not available to us in the preparation of this report. No foliar injury was visible on tree #201 associated with the development activities on the adjacent lot during my site visit. On the other hand, such injuries may present several years following injury.

Designs provided to us by our client suggest that without any arboricultural management, a maximum of 25% of the total soil and root system radius at 3106 Washington Ave. is exposed to disturbance within an 8x TPZ multiplication factor (headings 120°-210°).

Relative to House #4 and driveway designs provided to us, the subject Sequoia's species profile, the species tolerance to construction and pruning, the present growing conditions, and current tree vitality have all been evaluated. A 12x multiplication TPZ factor applied as a full circle covers an area of 606 m<sup>2</sup>. Using the STPZ approach (Figure 9) with the existing Tree Management Plan will preserve 350 m<sup>2</sup> or 57%

of a 12x TPZ soil/root system area. Within an 8x TPZ area scenario, 75% of the soil and root system is protected.

#### 3.7 Exploratory excavation

Exploratory excavation (i.e., root mapping) was conducted on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, using pneumatic soil excavation to locate roots and determine the root location, size, and quantity. Layout of the survey area was primarily focused on the edge of a proposed excavation cut north side of proposed houses #3 and 4, running from east to west, 8 m from the north property line. Low branch pruning was conducted to enable the technician to access the trench layout within the dripline of the tree. The locations of the two exploratory trenches are referenced in *Figure 10* and *Figure 13*.

All roots larger than 2.5 cm Ø exposed were geolocated (*Figure* 13) and inventoried in *Table* 3. The maximum depth of exploratory excavation was 60 cm as the bulk of fibrous and structural roots were observed in the upper 45 cm of the soil profile. Small fibrous roots were quite dense within the tree's dripline, and relatively few larger roots (>2.5 cm Ø) were encountered across the 12 m trench span running from east to west. A second trench was exposed running 9 m in length from north to south, and only fibrous roots were observed.



Figure 10. Aerial photo of exploratory excavation (obtained January 29, 2025).



Figure 11. Aerial photo of exploratory excavation (obtained January 29, 2025) facing west.



Figure 12. View of west side of exploratory trench and root locations 9, 8, and 7 (from left to right).



Figure 13. Aerial photo of exploratory excavation (obtained January 29, 2025), root locations, and root size.

Table 3. Exploratory excavation root inventory

Root #	Root heading from trunk (°)	Root Ø (cm)	Distance of root to trunk (m)	Approximate CTPZ factor
1	110	3	10.6	9
2	120	2.5	7.5	6.5
3	120	2.5	7.3	6.5
4	120	2.5	7	6
5	135	5	4.6	4
6	160	2.5	3.8	3.5
7	160	2.5	3.6	3
8	180	6	3.4	3
9	180	10	3.4	3

#### 4.0 Recommendations

Based on the limited abundance and relatively small size of roots exposed, root pruning to accommodate proposed House #4 (as designed) is anticipated to have minimal effect on tree health and tree stability. A total of 3 roots exposed were larger than 5 cm  $\varnothing$  at the point where pruning would be required. The largest of those roots exposed was 10 cm  $\varnothing$ . Site soil depth and volume appears to be ideal for the Sequoia to respond to this minimal amount of root pruning.

The implementation of arboricultural management guidelines outlined in the Arborist Report (D. Clark Arboriculture, June 2023) and revised Tree Management Plan (D. Clark Arboriculture, November 2023) will provide adequate soil and root system protection for a long-lived Sequoia tree using the STPZ approach outlined in this report. Branch pruning to provide required clearance for the driveway and building is unlikely to affect the tree's overall vitality if the treatment is localized as prescribed in part 3.4 of this report.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these trees.

Should any issues arise from this report, I am available to discuss them by phone, email or in person. Regards,

Ryan Senechal

UBC Master's of Urban Forestry Leadership (MUFL)

ISA Certified Arborist ON-1272AT

My Son

ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification

BC Wildlife & Danger Tree Assessor #3013P

#### **Disclosure Statement**

An arborist uses their education, training and experience to assess trees and provide prescriptions that promote the health and wellbeing, and reduce the risk of trees.

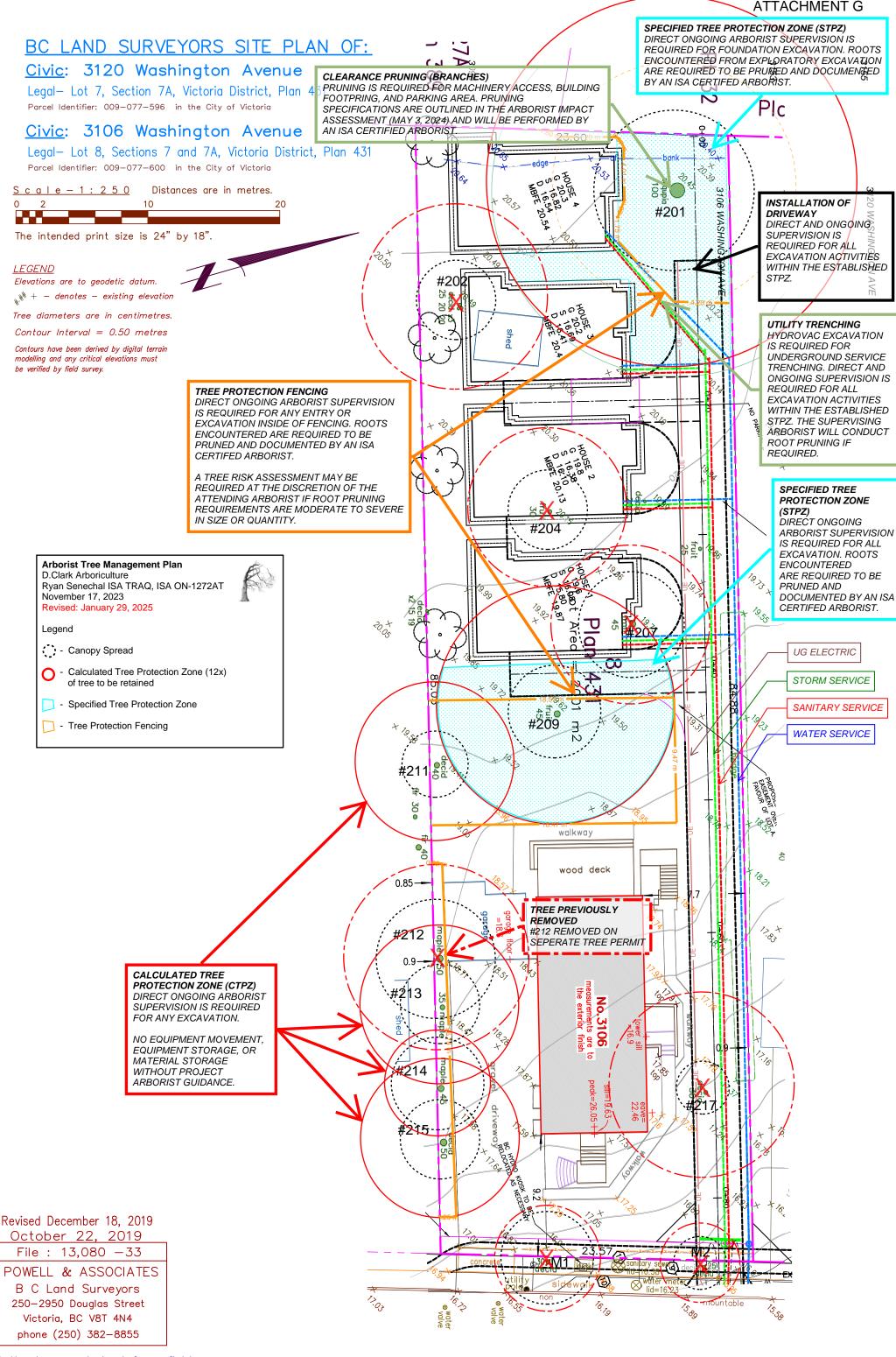
The prescriptions set forth in this report are based on the documented indicators of risk and health noted at the time of the assessment and are not a guarantee against all potential symptoms and risks.

Trees are living organisms and subject to continual change from a variety of factors including but not limited to disease, weather and climate, and age. Disease and structural defects may be concealed in the tree or underground. It is impossible for an arborist to detect every flaw or condition that may result in failure, and an arborist cannot guarantee that a tree will remain healthy and free of risk.

To live near trees is to accept some degree of risk. The only way to eliminate the risks associated with trees is to eliminate all trees.

#### **Assumptions and Limiting Conditions**

- Altering this report in any way invalidates the entire report.
- The use of this report is intended solely for the addressed client and may not be used or reproduced for any reason without the consent of the author.
- The information in this report is limited to only the items that were examined and reported on and reflect only the visual conditions at the time of the assessment.
- The inspection is limited to a visual examination of the accessible components without dissection, excavation or probing, unless otherwise reported. There is no guarantee that problems or deficiencies may not arise in the future, or that they may have been present at the time of the assessment.
- Sketches, notes, diagrams, etc. included in this report are intended as visual aids, are not considered to scale except where noted and should not be considered surveys or architectural drawings.
- All information provided by owners and or managers of the property in question, or by agents acting on behalf of the aforementioned is assumed to be correct and submitted in good faith. The consultant cannot be responsible or guarantee the accuracy of information provided by others.
- It is assumed that the property is not in violation of any codes, covenants, ordinances or any other governmental regulations.
- The consultant shall not be required to attend court or give testimony unless subsequent contractual arrangements are made.
- The report and any values within are the opinion of the consultant, and fees collected are in no way
  contingent on the reporting of a specified value, a stipulated result, the occurrence of a subsequent
  event, or any finding to be reported.



Setbacks are derived from field survey.

Parcel dimensions shown hereon are derived from Land Title Office records.



471 Cecelia Road, Victoria, BC V8T 4T4 T. 250-388-5251 | F. 250-388-5269 info@burnsidegorge.ca | www.burnsidegorge.ca

June 22, 2023

Mayor & Council #1 Centennial Square Victoria, BC

Dear Mayor and Council:

## BGLUC Feedback for Rezoning and Subdivision Application CLC00412 for 3106 Washington Avenue

On June 19, 2023, the Burnside Gorge Land Use Committee (BGLUC) hosted a CALUC community meeting where a proposal to rezone 3106 Washington Avenue from the current R-1B Single Family Dwelling Lots to Site Specific Multi Family Residential.

Louis Horvat of Zebra Designs and Erin Renwick of Greenspace Designs presented.

The proposal is for 8 units of residential strata townhome complex consisting of four 3 bedroom units and four 1 bedroom units in 4 separate two storey buildings. These would be located on a proposed panhandle lot behind an existing heritage home. The FSR of 0.47is well below the recommended neighbourhood plan of 0.8 FSR. There are 6 parking spaces provided and private secure bicycle storage for each unit.

There will be 5 existing trees removed and 13 new trees planted. The site design allows for some special mature trees to remain. The proposal is extensively landscaped

Comments and questions from the 18 attendees and online submissions focused on the following:

- Repeated positive comments by a majority of residents on the design appearance of the proposal.
- Comments that the concept of possible basement suites in some of the units were not desired as the density would be considered too high for the parking spaces proposed.

- Concern over the loss of a street parking space required for the proposed new driveway access.
- Resident commented he supports this proposal as it is what the community needs to balance the subsidized/ supportive housing projects.
- Comment that the landscaping use of permeable driveways to control rainwater and soften the roadway visually is appreciated.
- Comment objecting to the increase of traffic on Washington Avenue

As a majority of the attendees approved of this proposal the Burnside Gorge LUC supports this project proceeding to Planning and Development and to City Council.

Respectfully,

Avery Stetski

Land Use Committee Chair

**Burnside Gorge Community Association** 

cc: Sustainable Planning and Community Development Department Louis Horvat of Zebra Designs

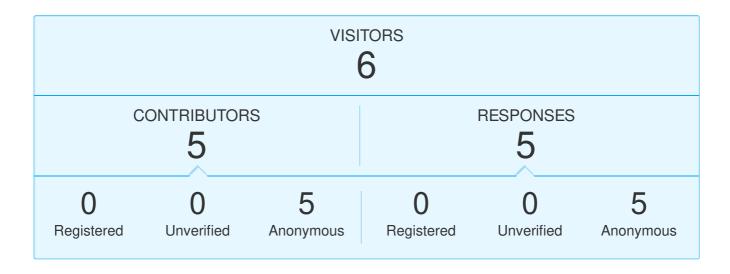
### Survey Responses

### 3106 Washington Avenue

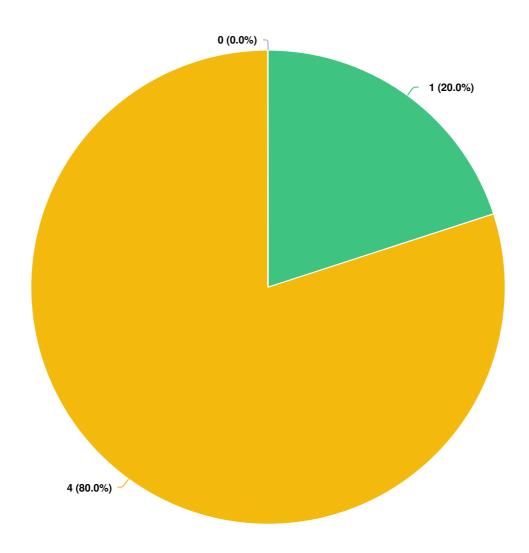
## Have Your Say

Project: 3106 Washington Avenue





#### Q1 What is your position on this proposal?





following pages.



**Login:** Anonymous

Email: n/a

**Responded At:** Jun 12, 2023 14:35:50 pm **Last Seen:** Jun 12, 2023 14:35:50 pm

IP Address: n/a

#### Q1. What is your position on this proposal?

#### Other (please specify)

While I support the development, and hope it works out, I have one realistic concern about the street parking problem, which will be further amplified by an additional laneway into the proposed development resulting in subsequent loss of more street parking spaces. In fact, with newly installed slowing features on Washington Avenue, the Avenue can't afford losing anymore parking along the road way. This location (Washington Ave) is overly congested already, there exists a parking problem, and the street will become even more congested once the over 35+ new townhouses are occupied to the west side of this proposed development. It'll be worse when families have visitors. For argument sake, this could be another 25-30+ cars on the street if families have more than one car each. The additional laneway or entry way into the proposed development further reduces already strained street parking. A solution for everyone - The suggestion would be to create a lane where the garage sits and move the garage to the back of the original heritage home on a new base. This solution supports development, while offering far less impact on the actual street. This is fair approach to a community that is already strained while supporting the family that wants to develop their land. There seems to be sufficient land behind the heritage house so it should work out for everyone as a fair compromise. Thank you, David

#### Q2. Comments (optional)

not answered

Q3. Your Full Name

David Hammond

Q4. Your Street Address

3120 Washington Ave

Q5. Your email address (optional)



Login: Anonymous

Email: n/a

**Responded At:** Jun 12, 2023 20:43:56 pm **Last Seen:** Jun 12, 2023 20:43:56 pm

IP Address: n/a

Q1. What is your position on this proposal?

Other (please specify)
Support with caveats

#### Q2. Comments (optional)

We support the construction of the new homes but don't agree to the secondary suites for the following reason: The main concern will be parking or lack thereof. Parking on Washington Ave presently is very tight. Once the new townhome development located beside 3106 Washington Ave becomes occupied no doubt a significant percentage of those residents will be parking on the street. With the construction of 4 new homes at 3106 Washington Ave there will no doubt be a minimum of 4 vehicles that need a place to park. If any of the families that purchase are 2 vehicle families then there will be increased demand for parking. If secondary suites are allowed then there will be demand for at least 4 more vehicles that require parking space. With the planned driveway location to the right side of the main residence that in itself will remove at least one parking space from the street. A secondary concern is the proposed modern design of the new residences. That design will not fit in with demographics of the neighborhood.

Q3. Your Full Name	Russell & amp; Frances Howard
Q4. Your Street Address	2-3120 Washington Avenue
Q5. Your email address (optional)	not answered



Login: Anonymous

Email: n/a

Responded At: Jun 20, 2023 14:57:08 pm Last Seen: Jun 20, 2023 14:57:08 pm

IP Address: n/a

Q1. What is your position on this proposal?

Other (please specify)

parking concerns with amendment to include secondary suites

#### Q2. Comments (optional)

Secondary suites were not mentioned during neighbourhood canvassing by owners. In this development proposal it looks like there is one parking space per unit plus 2 visitor parking spaces. This means potentially there could be a minimum of 4 more cars being parked on Washington Ave. There has been parking spaces lost due to the recent road narrowing at the crossing to the Doric Connector, as well as what would appear to be 2 spaces lost for the panhandle lane creation. The parking load increase on Washington Ave from the Formwell Washington development of 32 units right next door has yet to be determined. As well, there are two houses on the block that do not have driveways and so owners must park on the Avenue. During the community input process for the recently completed development at 3120 Washington, basements for the units were turned down due to a concern about them being converted to secondary suites and thereby increasing the parking load on Washington. With increased density in the neighbourhood added after that time, we cannot see how adding secondary suites to this proposal is any more acceptable than it was then. We support the 4 unit development but not the amended addition of secondary suites.

Q3. Your Full Name	Gerry and Shirley Malnis
Q4. Your Street Address	7-3120 Washington Ave, Victoria BC V9A1P6
05 Vour email address (ontional)	



Login: Anonymous

Email: n/a

**Responded At:** Jun 27, 2023 07:25:46 am **Last Seen:** Jun 27, 2023 07:25:46 am

IP Address: n/a

#### Q1. What is your position on this proposal?

#### Other (please specify)

I am support of Victoria trying to provide more housing but the planning needs to be better thought out regarding availability of street parking. If this proposal goes through we will have to move. The parking on the street is already unmanageable at times. See comment below.

#### Q2. Comments (optional)

We are okay with the initial proposal for 4 additional units but what was not shared was that they would have secondary units. With the addition of 8 units in 3120 the parking on the street has increased and with the 35 units in 3190 with only 4 guest spots about to populate, the parking will only get worse. The city is ignoring the fact that people who can afford these units have one or two cars. Don't tell us everyone is using public transportation or the galloping goose. This is a false narrative. This new proposal with secondary suites could have as many as 16 cars added to the street. They already have rentals in the current house which take up spaces on the street and they leave notes on the cars saying they own those street spaces.

Q3. Your Full Name

Dr. Adam Jonathan Con and Christopher Bowen

Q4. Your Street Address

3103 Washington Ave

Q5. Your email address (optional)



**Login:** Anonymous

Email: n/a

**Responded At:** Jun 30, 2023 22:10:27 pm **Last Seen:** Jun 30, 2023 22:10:27 pm

**IP Address:** n/a

Q1. What is your position on this proposal?

Oppose

#### Q2. Comments (optional)

I am the owner of 3065 Washington Ave (since 2003), a 1911 Character Home, identified with Historical Merit, located within 75m of the proposed development application. I support the idea of increased density on this lot, but have concerns with the proposal 'as is'. Washington Ave has seen a dramatic increase in density through two other recent developments and on street parking has already become a problem. With another 30+ unit development about to come onto the market (with only four designated visitor spots) and the on-street competition for parking for those accessing the Galloping Goose Trail and the Children's park across the road on Ceceila Rd, either more parking stalls need to be included in the proposal or fewer units built. 8 units in 4 buildings are proposed. 6 parking stalls are in the design, but only 4 are free and clear of each other as 2 of the 6 stalls are stacked, and block in 2 other stalls. This approach ties the stacked stalls to the buildings they are located next to and eliminates their value as 'visitor spots' for any of the other units. The panhandle design will also eliminate at least one existing parking spot from the street. Suggestions: Keep the parking plan the same and remove all secondary suites from the plan (or at least from houses #3 and #4). Developers of the neighbouring, similar and recent developments initially asked for basement suites and, for the reason above (parking), they listened to us (neighbours) and changed their proposals. Reduce the number of buildings from 4 to 3. This provides more options for parking and greenspaces. Add access gate(s) from Lot A to the multi-use path - Doric Connector - that runs alongside it. This will reduce traffic along Washington Ave by providing the 4 buildings easier bike access to the Connector and the additional street parking available on Carroll St (when there is none left on Washington Ave or Cecelia Rd). Using the parking available on Carroll St will also help reduce the need for Washington Ave residents from having to park on Burnside Road as some already have to. Consider removing more, non-native trees, especially those near the end of their life cycle and replacing them with more native trees elsewhere on the property. Old fruit trees and other non-native species are in decline due to climate change and require additional resources to maintain them. By removing them and planting hardier trees elsewhere, more options for parking become available if Lot A is made slightly larger. Remove or move the existing shed on Lot B to the rear of the Lot and create access to Lot A from the south side of the property. This frees up more room and creates a shared driveway. The eliminates any clearance challenges faced by having access to Lot A run along the north side of the property, preserves the existing street parking as is and leaves more of a green space on the

Q3. Your Full Name	Cameron Burton
Q4. Your Street Address	3065 Washington Ave
Q5. Your email address (optional)	

Dear Council members, and CALUC representative, Avery Stetski,

My husband and I are residents at 3103 Washington Ave, a development of four houses, built in 2021 and across the street from # 3106.

We have lived here for two years now and like this area very much; the mix of housing and our proximity to the Galloping Goose bike trail, the Gorge waterway, and our close proximity to downtown Victoria are all perfect for our lifestyle. But, our four houses were the first of three large construction projects on Washington: eight similar homes directly opposite our's, and Formwell's 34-unit construction site slightly further up the street, which is nearing completion. Move-in dates are set for July.

As you no doubt know, Washington Ave is a narrow road, forming a connection between Burnside Rd and Gorge Rd and because of that it was already a busy street. With all these new developments, parked cars now take up both sides of the street, (and that's right now before the 34-units are inhabited), so much so that it is impossible for two cars to pass each other at any time along any section of the street. When our neighbours at 3106 promoted the idea of constructing four houses in their backyard, they mentioned nothing about those homes including secondary suites. So, many of us are dismayed to learn that, should this project go ahead, we would potentially be looking at at least another eight carspossibly more, jostling for a parking space on Washington Ave.

Whether we like it or not, many couples or families today still own at least one vehicle. None of the new houses that have been built along this street so far are low-cost housing units; they are expensive properties- meaning that everyone of those home-owners also owns one (and often two or more) vehicles. This is the current reality. Ignoring this fact will not make it go away. While we understand the pressing need for more housing in Victoria, it cannot come at the cost of ignoring the fact that vehicles are still an ever-present reality in our communities.

Unless our neighbours at 3106 are going to build underground parking for their new homes and suitesor have enough space outside the houses for eight parking places, plus a couple of visitor parking spots, then obviously those cars will end up trying to find room along Washington Ave.

As you can imagine, we are very concerned about this real possibility and consider it of utmost importance that the Council and CALUC re-visit the 3106 development proposal with a view to insisting on adequate parking facilities for the four houses and suites our neighbours are planning to build. We would like to invite you to come and take a look at what is happening along Washington Ave, if indeed you haven't already done so.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth and Adrian Norfolk

Dear Mayor Alto and City Council Members,

I am writing to express my concern over the 3106 Washington Avenue proposal.

I am not opposed to the development of 4 units as the owners verbally initially presented to us; however, I am very concerned about their proposal to have secondary suites. The reason for this opposition is because of parking. The city has been using the rationale that "increasing housing density is directly targeted for people who want a vehicle free lifestyle." The reality is that anyone who can afford these units has one or two cars.

The recently finished development of 8 units at 3120 Washington added more than 8 cars; there are at least an additional 5 cars that park on the street. The previous development 3103 has 4 units but one of the units has tenants and in total they have 4 cars which adds 3 to the streets. The next massive development at 3190 Washington has 35 units with only 4 guest parking spaces; this will surely over pack the crowded street.

The 3106 proposal with 4 new units might be a small consideration in terms of helping to increase housing, but with secondary suites, as many as 16 vehicles could be added to the congestion.

In addition the current Burnside/Washington/Dupplin intersection with the added congestion no longer functions well. It need to be a proper stop light. I've been almost run over several times with my dog as drivers ignore the flashing pedestrian lights; I see cars illegally driving around the barrier; and, during morning rush hour it is impossible to enter Burnside from Washington because of the long line up of cars on Burnside and the building number of cars on Washington.

This is unsustainable. This city needs to consider a better solution and stop assuming this is a residential street where no one drives a car or has more than one car.

Adam J Con and Chjristopher Bowen 4-3103 Washington Avenue

Dear council,

Re: Proposed development at 3106 Washington Ave

My name is Wendy Wall. I'm a resident at 3050A Washington Ave responding to a notice of a proposed development at 3106 Washington Ave. I'm also president of the Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association.

First, I commend the owner of the property, Tom Buchanan, for their vision. This infill housing is exactly the kind of creative solution that provides additional housing while preserving the character of our neighbourhood by retaining the original house. I also acknowledge the attractive design that Zebra Design has put forward. I support the project in principle but have some questions and practical concerns based on the experiences of strata owners and councils that I have assisted over the last 11 years.

I offer the following in hopes that it will spark conversation and long-term thinking for the projects brought to you for approval. These are not houses, they are communities. Strata corporations have to manage themselves like small cities managing infrastructure, budgets, and legal responsibilities. I ask all parties involved to take the same view as if you were making decisions about the infrastructure you are responsible for. You hold all the cards. The decisions you make today set out the future of this strata. Many of those decisions can't be undone once the buildings are constructed and the strata plan is filed. The strata owners will have to live with the benefits or consequences of your decisions for the lifetime of the strata corporation.

#### **Parking**

Currently house 1 and 2 have 2 tandem parking stalls where 1 is for the owners of the strata lot and 1 is labelled visitor. Visitor stalls in these locations aren't practical. There will be times when residents are blocked from entering or leaving with no idea whose vehicle is in the visitor spot. A more practical solution would be for the strata plan to be filed with 2 limited common property (LCP) stalls for house 1, 2 LCP stalls for house 2, 1 LCP stall for house 3, and no stall for house 4. The parking spot beside the sequoia could be a common property parking stall for visitors. This stall is also important so that contractors have a place to park larger vehicles with easy access to their equipment and supplies. Contractors such as gutter cleaners won't want to provide services if they have to park on the street. Also the access lane should be wide enough to easily allow a tow truck to enter the property. There will be times when it's necessary for the strata to tow a vehicle.

#### **Rental suites**

At a recent presentation, Louis Horvat from Zebra Design, explained that creating a rental suite would be optional and each house would be built to suit the buyer. This would be an opportunity lost. One of the most positive elements of this proposal is creating 4 rental suites. Victoria has a housing crisis and the addition of 4 nicely sized 1-bedroom units would be a great addition to our neighbourhood. I feel very strongly that the rental suites should be a requirement and protected by covenant if possible.

#### Short term accommodationS

Too many strata and rental units that could be used as homes are being lost due to owners using them for short term accommodations (STA). It would be beneficial for all to make a requirement for this development that STA use is not permitted for the main living units or the lower suites. It is also very

upsetting for an owner to buy their dream home only to find out that they are living beside a "hotel". Prohibiting STAs from the outset would go a long way to maintaining a healthy community and reducing conflict.

#### **Heat pumps and EV charging**

I can't tell from the drawings if heat pumps and level 2 electric vehicle charging stations have been contemplated. I highly encourage that all 8 units have heat pumps installed. Adding them afterwards is more difficult for various physical and legal reasons. Strata law is complicated! I also encourage installing a level 2 EV charger on houses 1-3 or at the very least sizing the electrical service accordingly so Chargers can be added. I also encourage designing all 4 bike rooms to allow charging of E-bikes. Resolving these needs in the design would be very beneficial. Currently there is a lot of conflict and frustration in strata corporations revolving around these topics.

#### **Factors affecting Insurance**

The most expensive portion of a strata corporation's annual budget is insurance. It is becoming increasingly more difficult for strata corporations to get insurance at all, let alone at competitive rates. I offer some practical points to help this community in the long-term by making design choices that mitigate issues for insurance. Consider this a selling feature!

Are the walkways beside each home wide enough for wheelchairs? Are wheelchairs able to travel over pavers with vegetation in the cracks? Strata corporations have a duty to accommodate disabilities under the *Human Rights Code*. Ensuring the original design takes mobility into consideration is in the long-term best interests of the strata corporation. A need for retrofits later often starts with contentious litigation. That's not healthy for any community.

Water damage is the number one reason for strata insurance claims and the biggest driver in the strata insurance crisis that has seen premiums increase 100%-800% in a single year and deductibles increase significantly as well. It is crucial for stratas to maintain roofs, gutters, perimeter drains etc to mitigate water damage. With the trees so close to the buildings, can preventative maintenance be done adequately? For example, between house 3 and 4 there are 3 trees called Carpinus Betulus 'Frans Fontaine'. These grow to a height of 40' and up to 20' in width (6.1 metres), yet the space between these houses is only 3.35 m. It seems an impractical choice that has the potential to make it difficult to maintain buildings 3 and 4. Perhaps the landscapers could plan 3 large planters instead, which would avoid root damage to perimeter drains and the foundation, and could be repositioned if needed to allow the upper and lower windows of house 3 to receive light. Similarly, the Acer Circinatum (vine maples) in each back patio area grow to a width of 20 ft (6.1 m). The beds in the back are only 1.5 X 3 m. Trees so close to the buildings can cause both maintenance and insurance issues. Surely there are other smaller species that could be chosen.

Easy access for fire trucks is also a very important factor for insurance reasons.

#### Other Landscaping

The landscaping design is very pleasing and the inclusion of native plants and pollinator-friendly plants is a welcome addition to the neighbourhood. However, a few details are unclear. The landscaping plans go into a great deal of detail about sod and irrigation. However at the presentation Erin, the landscaper, said there would be no sod. If so, I would like to see a revised landscaping plan that makes that clear. Where irrigation runs is also unclear. I couldn't see those details. If there's irrigation or driveway

lighting that raises the question...where is the common property electrical room? How is it accessed? Will someone have to cross limited common property to reach it? Legal disputes have arisen because of the exclusive use nature of LCP and that others don't have the right to cross it to reach a common property room.

Building more homes isn't enough. For the Homes for People Plan to work we have to build homes that people will enjoy living in: strata corporations that have their best chance of being functional, livable communities.

We're all in this together. Let's open up conversations that think about the lives of the strata owners who will live at 3106 Washington. I am happy to help workshop ideas and solutions for this and any other proposed developments. Feel free to contact me any time.

Sincerely,

Wendy Wall (she/her), President - Board of Directors

Celebrating 50 years (1973-2023) Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association (VISOA) 602-620 View Street, Victoria BC V8W 1J6 Dear Mayor and Council,

Re: Proposed Development of 3106 Washington Ave

I am the 21-year owner of 3065 Washington Ave (since 2003), a 1911 Character Home, identified with Historical Merit, located within 75m of the proposed development application.

I still cannot support this project 'as is'. As stated in a previous letter <u>and even acknowledged in the developer's most recent revision letter</u>, Washington Ave has seen 'vigorous development' and density increases through recent developments and on-street-parking is already a problem. This proposed development is located across the road and next door to three very new developments where five single family homes have been replaced with 46 units over 3 lots. Despite a warning to the city from the neighbours, that the decision to grant a height variance for the latest, and largest, 34-unit development next door would be an error (as the variance was being used to hide the developer's self-induced shortfall to provide adequate parking for the number of units they wanted) the development went ahead and we are now dealing with the precise, and anticipated problems, that the city was warned about ahead of time.

The history as to how we got here is important. In March 2021, previous Councillor's Alto and Andrew recused themselves from the vote on the 34-unit development due to their personal interests in the area and only Councillor Thorton-Joe attended the development site prior to the vote. What was obvious to Councilor Thorton-Joe and the neighbourhood, when looking beyond the development site, was its proximity to the Galloping Goose Trail, a park, the narrow street with a history of a child pedestrian fatality, and the calm and quite nature of the middle section of the street. These were the reasons why she voted against the 34-unit development as it was proposed.

The City was warned that the nature of the garages (enclosed) of the 34-unit development would encourage them to be used for storage and not vehicles and this has come true. Few of the garages contain vehicles. The 4 designated guest-spots are perpetually full. Many of the units own more than one vehicle (family oriented remember?) and the spill over of vehicles, from the development, line both sides of the narrow street. These vehicles are then combined with the Park and Galloping Goose user's vehicles, causing those unable to bike or walk a significant barrier, sometimes hundreds of meters, to get to and from their homes. We keep hearing from developers that people will use their garages for their vehicles and that parking will not become a problem. This has not been the case here. Long term residents, senior citizens, have resorted to placing traffic cones in front of their homes in order to have somewhere to park nearby.

The developer of 3106 is aware of the proximity of the Park and Galloping Goose as noted in their most recent proposal letter. What they do not mention is just how popular the park is (with inadequate parking) and the impact the easy access to the Galloping Goose trail (with no parking) already has on us residents. The city needs to take a step back and look at this street/neighbourhood as a whole. Galloping Goose trail users use the Park's lot to park their cars and access the Trail from there. The city's efforts to make Victoria 'bike friendly' haven't addressed the fact that not everyone rides all the way from home and back. Many choose to only ride part of the way and need places to park while out on their bikes. Washington Ave has become desirable 'free day parking' for many who use the Trail and, once the park's lot is full, the vehicles quickly spill out onto Cecila Rd and then onto Washington Ave.

8 units in 4 buildings are being proposed. 6 parking stalls are shown in the design, but only 4 have 'unobstructed access', without potential of boxing others in. Zoning Regulation Bylaw Schedule C - Off Street

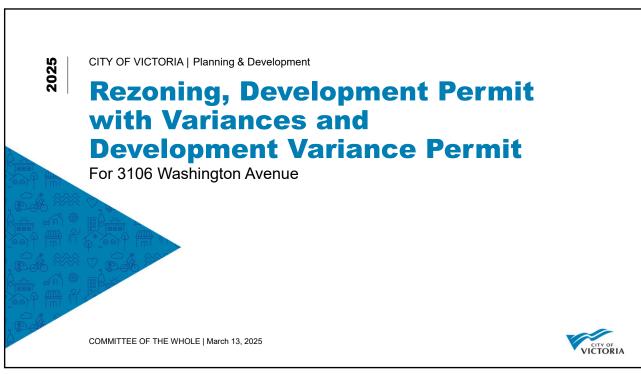
Parking Regulations requires more parking for this kind of development as proposed. Also, no visitor spots have been considered. The panhandle design will also eliminate at least one existing parking spot from the street.

#### Suggestions:

- 1. Keep the parking plan the same and remove all secondary suites from the plan. Developers of the neighbouring, similar and recent, developments initially asked for basement suites and, for the reason above (parking), they listened to us (neighbours) and changed their proposals and these two developments have not caused any burden on the neighbourhood.
- 2. Reduce the number of buildings from 4 to 3. This provides more options for parking and greenspaces.
- 3. Add access gate(s) from Lot A to the multi-use path Doric Connector that runs alongside it. This will reduce traffic along Washington Ave by providing the 4 buildings easier bike access to the Connector and to the additional street parking available on Carroll St (for when there is none left on Washington Ave or Cecelia Rd). Providing easier access to the parking available on Carroll St will also help reduce the need for Washington Ave residents from having to park on Burnside Road as some already have to.
- 4. Consider removing 1 or 2 more non-native trees, especially those near the end of their life cycle and replacing them with more native trees elsewhere on the property. Old fruit trees and other non-native species are in decline due to climate change and require additional resources to maintain them. By removing them and planting hardier trees elsewhere, more options for parking become available if Lot A is made slightly larger.
- 5. Remove or move the existing shed on Lot B to the rear of the Lot and create access to Lot A from the south side of the property. This frees up more room and creates a shared driveway. This eliminates any clearance challenges faced by having access to Lot A run along the north side of the property, preserves the existing street parking as is and preserves more green space by not disturbing the north side of the lot.
- 6. Earmark the 3000 block of Washington Ave for a future parking and garage usage study once these recent blocks of developments are occupied and lived in. Repeatedly Victoria residents, the Mayor and Council have been told by developers that "parking is not a concern' and 'residents will use their garages for their cars' (and not for extra storage). A proper study would give developers, residents, Mayor and Council accurate information and 'Victoria specific' facts regarding the effectiveness of parking plans and the actual use of these spaces. Our experience on Washington Ave is that already the previous parking allotments were not enough. The overflowing parking from the 34 new units next door and this proposal 'as is' will only add to this error in judgement. I'd love to read a study to prove us wrong.

Thank you for considering my objection to the proposed development 'as is' and considering some or all of my suggestions.

Cameron Burton Homeowner – 3065 Washington Ave







## Subject Property





# Subject Property (Summer)





**Context**Directly East of the Site

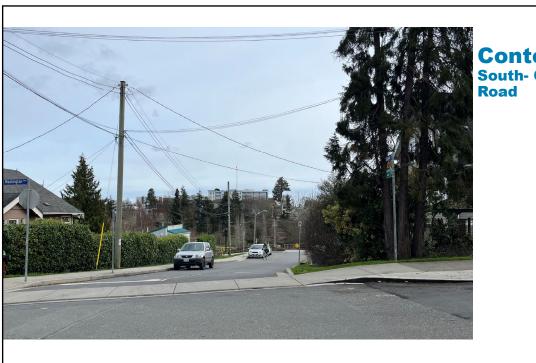


5



Context
South of the Site –
across the street





Context
South- Cecelia



7



Context
Southwest –
across the street

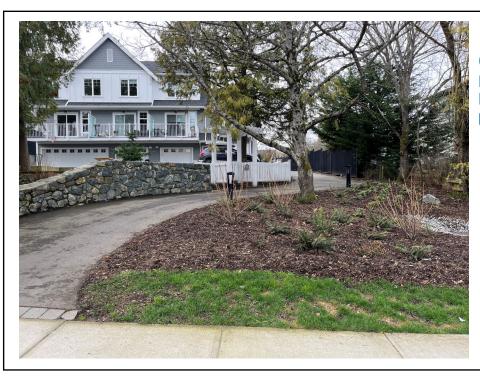




#### Context West



9



# Context Directly west – Doric Connector portion



#### **Legislative Authority**

#### Rezoning matters considered under Section 479 of the Local Government Act (LGA):

- · The use of land, buildings and other structures
- The density of the use of the land, buildings and other structures
- The siting, size and dimensions of buildings and other structures, and the uses that are permitted on the land

#### Development Permit with Variance matters considered under Section 498 of the LGA:

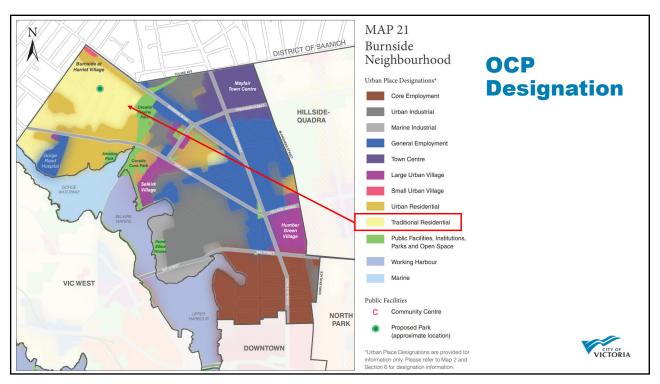
- The form and character of intensive residential development
- · Variances from the Zoning Regulation Bylaw but not including variances to use or density.

#### Development Variance Permit matters considered under Section 498 of the LGA:

· Variances from the Zoning Regulation Bylaw but not including variances to use or density.



11



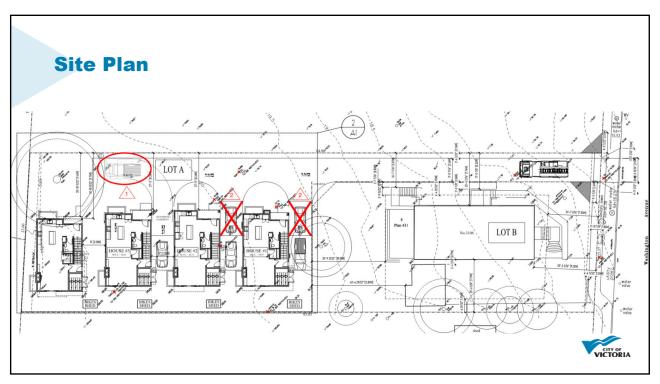
# **Development Permit Areas**

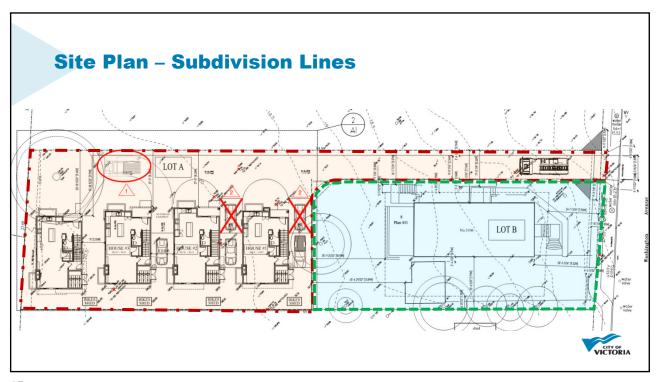
- DPA 15B: Intensive Residential Panhandle Lot
- DPA 15F: Missing Middle Housing



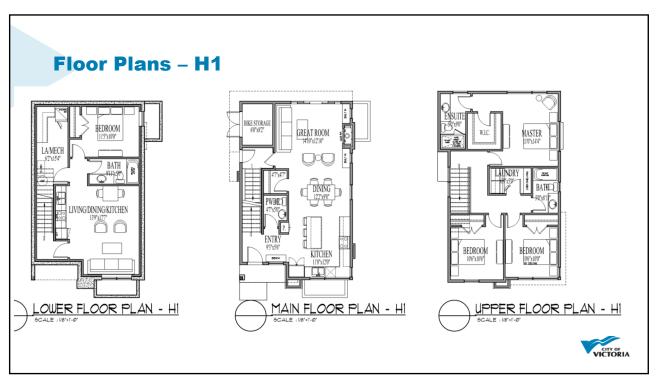


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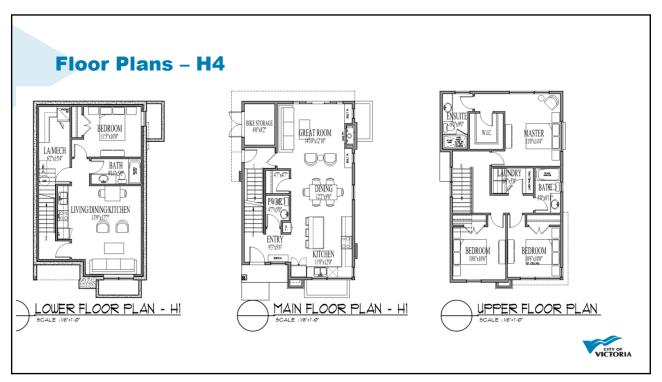






















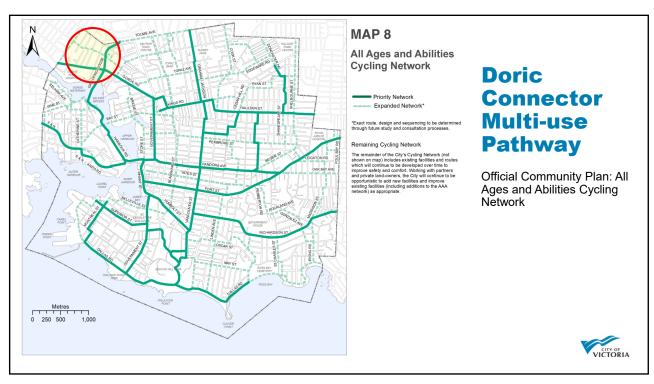


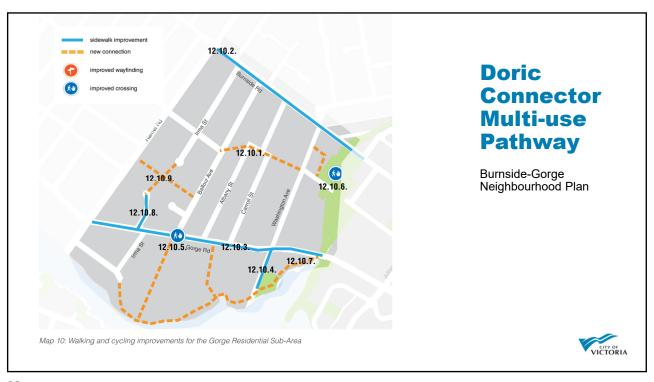


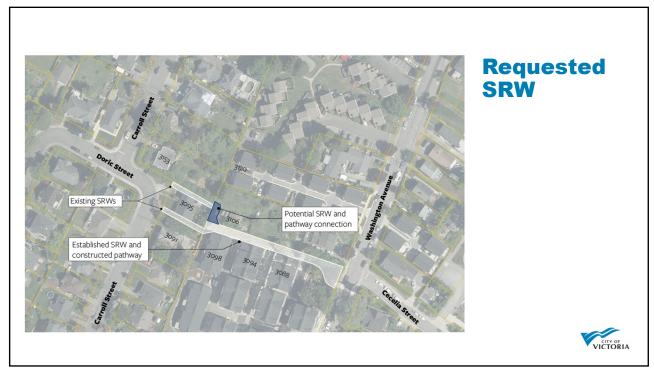


Rendering
Approximate
property and fence
lines marked

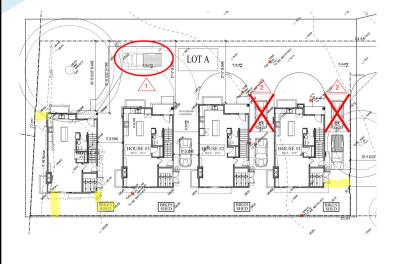








## Lot A (Panhandle) Variances

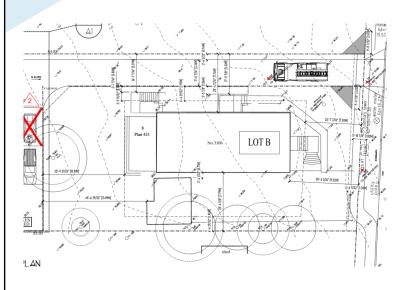


- increase the number of buildings (not including accessory buildings) permitted on the lot from 1 to 4
- reduce the minimum front yard setback from 7.50m to 2.79m
- reduce the minimum rear yard setback from 7.50m to a minimum of 5.0m
- reduce the south side yard setback from 7.50m to 2.42m
- reduce the separation space between the accessory building and primary structures from 2.4m to 1.19m
- locate the accessory buildings in the side yard



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### Lot B

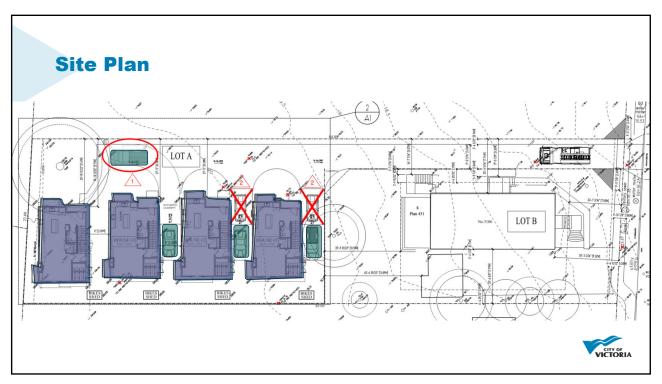


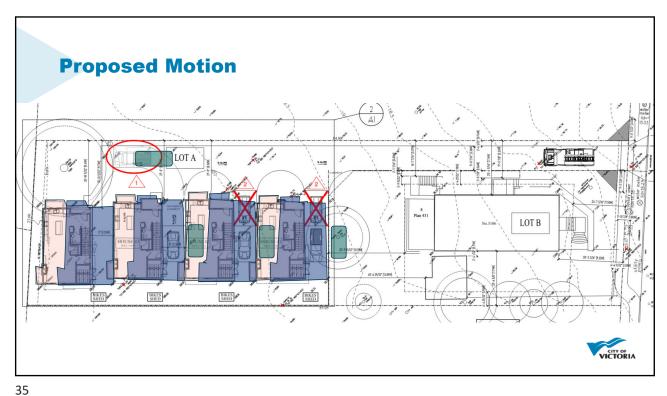
### **Revised variances**

Reduce the north side yard setback from 1.95m to 0.8m.



# Variance Differences in Recommended Motion Lot A (Panhandle) • reduce the rear yard setback from 7.50m to a minimum of 5m Lot B • (new variance) – reduce the rear yard setback from 10.61 to a minimum of 5









### **Committee of the Whole Report**

For the Meeting of March 13, 2025

**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 28, 2025

From: Derrick Newman, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities

**Subject:** Crystal Pool Replacement Project: Site Selection and Next Steps

### RECOMMENDATION

### That Council:

- a. Designate Central Park North as the site for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre, with a project budget of \$209.2 million; and
- b. Direct staff to procure the necessary resources to initiate the next phases of the project, with the design aligned with the Basis of Design (Appendix 1) and the Central Park North Design Concept (Appendix 2), once the funding Certificate of Approval is received from the Province of B.C; and
- c. Instruct staff to provide regular project updates to Council and the public; and
- d. Forward this recommendation to the Council meeting on March 13 for consideration.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Replacing the Crystal Pool recreation facility is a longstanding City priority to meet the growing demand for accessible community health and wellness programs and services.

In June 2024, Council directed staff to hold a referendum to allow voters to cast their ballot on the option to borrow up to \$168.9 million for a new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre, and to solicit input on a preferred site. The referendum, held on February 8, 2025, resulted in a majority of voters in support of funding the project through borrowing, and a clear preference for the Central Park North location.

To advance the project, staff are seeking Council direction on the location for the future facility, as well as formal endorsement of the design concept that will be applied. Based on insights from an interdisciplinary team of professionals, the Central Park North site is the lower-cost, faster-to-build and lower-risk option.

Staff recommend proceeding with the concept and amenities outlined in the Basis of Design, shown in Appendix 1, and the Central Park North Design Concept attached as Appendix 2. In advancing this project through the remaining stages, the City will apply industry-standard project management procedures. This includes maintaining close control of the scope, schedule and budget, while also

monitoring and managing risks and providing regular updates to Council and the public throughout the project timeline.

### **PURPOSE**

This report seeks confirmation of the site for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre and direction to proceed with the design and construction.

### **BACKGROUND**

The plan for the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre, built in 1971, has long been a focus of the City and Victoria's growing population. The aging building systems, significant accessibility barriers and high greenhouse gas emissions are among the primary concerns leading the City to pursue a replacement facility.

Following a 2017 feasibility study which considered renovating, expanding or replacing the facility, Council approved a plan to build a modern, accessible and energy-efficient facility in Central Park. In 2019, Council provided additional direction on the plan, emphasizing equity considerations and greenspace preservation and extending the timeline. The project was subsequently paused in early 2020 due to COVID-19.

In 2022, Council provided direction for staff to plan a referendum on funding and site selection. This decision was followed in 2023 with approval of a \$1.78 million budget for an updated feasibility study and cost estimates to reflect current market conditions. Following a June 2024 presentation to Council, staff were instructed to:

- Allocate \$47 million toward the project from the City reserves; and,
- To hold a referendum to seek voter assent on the question of borrowing up to \$168.9 million, as well as input on a preferred site (Central Park North or Central Park South).

The Crystal Pool referendum was held on February 8, 2025. A total of 58.71 per cent of voters supported borrowing the funds to complete the project, and 60.57 per cent selected Central Park North as the preferred location for the new facility. Of note, 21.18 per cent of registered voters cast ballots through this process.

### **ISSUES AND ANALYSIS**

With the referendum complete, staff are preparing to advance the project to the next phase. The following sections summarize the project components, most of which have been captured within previous reports to Council. Given the scale and complexity of this project, additional details on the risk management strategies and the reporting framework are also described.

### **Program and Design**

The concept design for both site options reflect the basis of design which was shaped by a comprehensive three-phase public engagement process from 2016-2018. Key features of design include:

• An 8,600 square metre building that is energy efficient, accessible, welcoming and accommodates a wide range of uses.

- An aquatic program and amenities featuring a 50-metre main pool tank with movable bulkhead, a leisure pool, shallow play area and 25-metre warm water lanes, two hot pools, a steam room, a sauna, a wet room for aquatic training and events, and an outdoor patio.
- A dryland program and amenities with four to five multi-purpose rooms accommodating a variety of activities, a fitness studio and a gymnasium.
- Approximately 100 vehicle parking and bicycle spaces.

Excerpts from the 2024 Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Feasibility Study are attached to this report. This includes the Basis of Design (Appendix 1), the Central Park North Concept Design (Appendix 2), and the Central Park South Concept Design (Appendix 3).

### **Site Options**

The two potential sites were assessed and compared on their quantitative and qualitative impacts and presented to Council in 2024. As noted above, the Central Park North location is more economical, takes less time to construct, and presents relatively lower risk than the Central Park South option. Although the latter would potentially allow service continuity during construction, it would also result in higher costs, a longer schedule and presents greater complexity. Table 1 provides a high-level comparison of the two site options.

Table 1 – Site Option Comparison

	Central Park North	Central Park South	
Service Impact	<ul> <li>Interim dryland program to be offered at separate location during construction.</li> </ul>	Best efforts to be made to maintain service continuity at existing facility during construction.	
Project Cost	Lower	Higher	
	No cost premium as existing facility will be demolished at the start of construction.	\$4.1M cost premium to extend the service life of the existing facility during construction.	
	Shorter	Longer	
Schedule	Single phase construction.	Two-phase construction.	
	Facility closure at start of construction.	Facility closure once the new building is constructed.	
	Less	More	
	<ul> <li>Lower impact to park amenities during construction.</li> </ul>	Management of both existing facility operation and new construction	
Complexity	Fewer trees removed, fewer trees at risk of removal.	Higher impact to park amenities during construction.	
		More trees to be removed, more trees at risk of being removed.	

### **Budget**

The Total Project Budget covers design, construction, equipment and commissioning, with allowances for construction market escalation. Developed in collaboration with two quantity surveyors and overseen by Turnbull Construction Project Managers, this budget assumes rigorous risk management measures. Final cost certainty will be achieved once design is complete, tenders

are awarded, and contracts are secured. The funding summary is shown in Table 2, and a detailed project budget is enclosed in the Financial Summary (Appendix 4).

Table 2: Total Project Budget Summary (millions)

Project Component	Central Park North	Central Park South
Total Project Budget	\$209.2	\$215.9
Funding from Debt Reduction Reserve	-\$30.0	-\$30.0
Funding from Parking Infrastructure Reserve	-\$17.0	-\$17.0
Net Cost Funded by Debt	\$162.2	\$168.9

### **Project Delivery**

The Project Team will consist of a design consultant, a Project Manager (PM) and a Construction Manager (CM). The prime consultant, led by designers home architecture + design and supported by professional engineers, has been procured to serve throughout the project lifecycle.

The project will be delivered using the Construction Manager (CM) for Services and Construction Manager at Risk method. It is important to note, the CM is selected based on qualifications and experience with similar projects. The CM joins the team during the design phase, contributing insights on material selection, constructability, scheduling, cost estimation and value engineering, along with market advice. This delivery method, common for recreation facilities, fosters stakeholder collaboration through enhanced communication, accountability, decision-making and risk management.

### **Risk Management**

The project team will remain focused on scope and schedule management, recognizing that effective decision-making and efficient use of time are critical to minimizing financial risk.

The City adopted a similar governance model for another recent major infrastructure initiative, the Firehall #1 project. The project team (including project leads, design consultants and subject matter experts) manage daily operations and report to a steering committee of senior City staff. This structure ensures proactive risk management and responsible use of contingencies. Staff follow the City's Capital Cost Estimate and Project Management policies while employing an industry-standard risk management strategy throughout the project.

The City's approach includes maintaining a detailed risk register and regular updates to both the steering committee and Council. Using qualitative and quantitative assessments, the project team identifies potential risks and allocates contingency funds only when needed. The budget tracking process documents all contingency allocations, ensuring transparency and accountability. In line with corporate standards, the project team and steering committee are empowered to manage the project within the approved budget. Should risks threaten to exceed allocated funds, staff will analyze available options and report to Council with recommendations.

The table below provides a summary of priority risks that the project team is currently monitoring along with mitigation measures.

Table 3 – Priority Project Risks

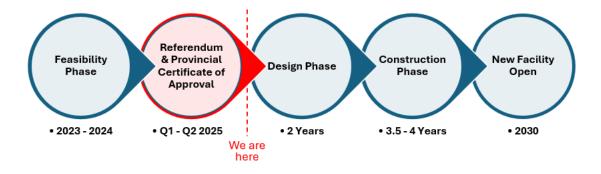
Issue	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Scope changes	Schedule Budget Performance	<ul> <li>Proceed with the referendum-approved design to maintain project momentum</li> <li>Use a decision-making framework for major changes, including cost and schedule impact analyses</li> </ul>
Supply chain uncertainty	Schedule Budget Performance	<ul> <li>Strategic procurements to secure materials early</li> <li>Monitoring market conditions to anticipate shifts</li> <li>Material substitutions for cost effective alternatives</li> <li>Use contractual safeguards to manage impacts</li> </ul>
Facility closure & transition to interim recreation service	Schedule Budget	- Early planning and communications - Work with regional partners to minimize impacts

### **Timeline and Reporting**

Once the development site is selected and the borrowing bylaw is adopted, staff will apply to the Province of B.C. for a Certificate of Approval to confirm project funding. Following receipt of this certificate, the necessary resources to execute the design phase will be secured and the design phase will officially commence.

The various phases of the project are highlighted in the graphic below, noting that timelines are subject to change depending on Council direction.

Figure 1: Project Timeline



Project status updates will be provided on a quarterly basis. When Council decisions are required, they will be presented in Council meetings for direction, while informational updates will be shared directly with Council, published on the City's website and shared with subscribers to the project newsletter. This approach supports the City's focus on transparency, accountability and reporting efficiency throughout the project lifecycle.

### **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

# Option 1: Proceed with Central Park North site and a budget of \$209.2 million (Recommended)

This option aligns with the recent referendum results and is recommended by staff as it minimizes construction costs and complexity. Under this option, the existing facility would be closed and demolished prior to the start of construction of the new facility. Additionally, this option minimizes impacts on park amenities and fewer trees would need to be removed. To mitigate the service disruption during the construction period, the project team will be establishing an interim plan to deliver dryland recreation programs in a separate location.

If approved, staff will advance the project to the design phase in accordance with the Basis of Design (Appendix 1) and the Central Park North Design Concept (Appendix 2).

### Option 2: Proceed with Central Park South and a budget of \$215.9 million

Council may also consider directing staff to proceed with the Central Park South site. While the Central Park South option offers the potential for continued service at the existing facility during construction, this option is more complex. As noted above, this site requires a two-phase construction process, constructing the new facility and then demolishing the existing facility and constructing the underground parking and park amenities. This process extends the project timeline and contains greater overall risk.

Should Council select this option, staff will proceed with the design phase in accordance with the Basis of Design (Appendix 1) and the Central Park South Design Concept (Appendix 3).

### Accessibility Impact Statement

This project supports the Accessibility Framework's goals to "provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs and services" and to "systematically remove and prevent barriers in City-owned buildings and facilities." A primary goal of the new facility design is accessibility for all, pursuing the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Certification.

2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Replacement of the Crystal Pool facility is a priority noted in the Strategic Plan and Corporate Plan.

### Impacts to Financial Plan

For 2025, the budget requirement for the Crystal Pool project is approximately \$1.8 to \$2 million depending on which site is selected, which will be funded by the Debt Reduction Reserve. No property tax impact is expected in 2025. For future years, borrowing requirements vary by site. In 2026, the Central Park North would require approximately \$15 million in borrowing, compared to about \$23 million for the Central Park South location.

Future property tax impacts associated with loan and reserve fund repayments, including the \$30 million Debt Servicing Reserve and the \$17 million Parking Reserve contributions, will be determined based on interest rates at the time of borrowing, any reductions in borrowing achieved through new revenue streams or grant funding and Council direction.

The 2017 Feasibility Study projected that increased facility usage would boost operating revenue by 35 to 38 per cent, with operating expenses estimated to rise by 25 to 50 per cent. While detailed operating budgets are still under development, preliminary estimates indicate that operating costs could rise by roughly \$1.3 to \$2 million annually. However, new revenue streams, such as updated programming fees, sponsorship opportunities and other revenues are expected to help offset these costs. Detailed operating budgets will be developed and incorporated into future financial plans as more accurate data becomes available. Staff will continue to explore additional revenue sources, including partnerships and eligible grants.

### Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

- 14.7 Support innovation and reinvestment in community assets that attract investment and support economic activity, (...), including, arts, culture and recreation facilities, (...)
- 21.20.1 Renew citywide recreational facilities at Crystal Pool ...

### CONCLUSION

This report marks a milestone in one of the City's largest infrastructure projects, with the confirmation of the site of the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre. As a strategic priority, this project supports the City's efforts to manage community assets and meet the evolving needs of a growing community with important social, health and wellness services.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Piwowar Derrick Newman

Manager, Major Capital Projects Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities

### Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

### **List of Attachments**

Appendix 1 – Basis of Design

Appendix 2 – Central Park North Design Concept

Appendix 3 – Central Park South Design Concept

Appendix 4 – Financial Summary



# 3 - Basis of Design

All three site options investigated in this study share common elements that are based on criteria established through extensive stakeholder and public engagement in earlier phases of this project.

- 3a. Project Principles
- **3b. Project Program**
- **3c. Design Principles**
- **3d. Operational Impact**
- 3e. Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
- 3f. Review of Regulations
- 3g. Project Visualizations

# 3a - Project Principles

# Five guiding principles guided the siting and design of each site option investigated.

### 1. Accessible

Ensuring meaningful access to the facility and all its parts.

- Among key considerations are:
  - fully accessible site circulation
  - front door, drop off and ease of access
  - multiple options to access each pool
  - level transitions throughout the facility
  - clear wayfinding
  - universally designed spaces

# 2. Inclusive (All ages, Abilities, Identities and Experiences)

Creating a facility that caters to the needs of a range of different users.

- Key considerations include:
  - spaces that can cater to programming for different age groups
  - · large universal change space
  - creating a universal facility (excluding gendered change rooms)
  - culturally inclusive
  - · universal design

### 3. Efficient and Sustainable

Reducing energy usage and minimizing the carbon footprint of the new facility.

- Strategies employed to achieve this include:
  - creating a high performing building envelope
  - using low carbon building systems for heating and cooling
  - designing an efficient mechanical system that reuses waste heat
  - reducing water consumption
  - considering alternate means of energy generation
  - using low-VOC materials

### 4. High Quality Health and Wellness Facility

Creating a multi-use facility that accommodates a wide range of health and wellness activities.

- This has been achieved by:
  - including multipurpose spaces that can accommodate various health and fitness activities
  - creating connection between indoor and outdoor spaces
  - designing a flexible aquatic configuration that can accommodate a range of programming

### 5. Place for Community

Creating a facility that is welcoming and enables community-building.

- Key considerations include:
  - creating a public lobby before the control point
  - including community focused multipurpose rooms
  - designing spaces that encourage informal and formal gathering

The Project Principles and Design Strategies diagram (*right*) is a result of extensive stakeholder and public consultation during the 2018 design phase.

**PROJECT PRINCIPLES** 

**DESIGN STRATEGIES** 

Accommodate those with non physical disabilities

Access for those who are aging

Improve security

Increase accessible parking

Consider needs of staff with disabilities

Way finding for those with vision challenges

Inclusive change rooms

Parking close to front door

Encourage sporting activities for girls

> Provide privacy where required

> Facilities for bicyclists

City of Victoria Climate Leadership Plan

Focus on low carbon building

Healthy materials

Maximize retention of trees

Operational efficiency

Energy efficient building

Water retention and conservation

Include opportunity for indoor sports

Don't lose the basketball court

Adequate space for therapy in leisure pool

> Reduce the amount of chlorine

Good water and air quality

Water temperature for different users

Places for therapy and rehabilitation

Flexible programming

Include opportunity for food services

Safety getting across street

Places for gathering

Places for community events

Privacy for adjacent buildings

Carefully consider surface parking **ACCESSIBLE** 

**INCLUSIVE** 

**EFFICIENT and SUSTAINABLE** 

HIGH QUALITY HEALTH and WELLNESS FACILITY

PLACE FOR COMMUNITY

No split levels at each floor

Fully accessible for all users

Elevator access to upper level

Multiple means to access all pool tanks

Universal change rooms

Universal wayfinding

Crime prevention through environmental design

Universal washrooms

Change rooms exit adjacent to both pool tanks

High performance building envelope

Low carbon building systems

Balance of capital and operational cost

Waste heat transfer from dry land program to pool

Significant retention of mature trees

Natural light

Alternative energy solutions

Low voc materials

Views to the park

Flexible fitness area

Environmental separation of fitness from pool

Two hot tubs that may be kept at different temperatures

25m warm water lanes

Gymnasium style multipurpose room

Outdoor patio adjacent to pools and fitness area

Movable floor and two bulkheads in main tank

Full lazy river

Expanded lobby and community spaces

Opportunity for future food vendors

Multiple options for pool viewing

Mix of community and active multi-purpose rooms

Landscape buffer to neighbourhoods

# 3b - Project Program

The project program is a summary of the spaces that will be provided in the new facility. It is a balanced combination of the requirements, uses, spaces, relationships and experiences that are to be included in the new facility for it to meet the Project Principles.

Each option consists of a lobby, administration, 2 multipurpose rooms and aquatic changerooms on level 1 along with a large double height natatorium space for aquatic programs. Level 2 includes a large open fitness studio, 4 additional multipurpose spaces, dryland change rooms and a viewing gallery into the natatorium. The building's basement houses the main service spaces of building and pool mechanical rooms, workshop, storage, and an electrical room. In addition, the lobby for each option has connection to a lower lobby and underground parking lot.

The following is a summary of the program, grouped into aquatic and dryland areas.

### **Aquatic Area**

Important considerations for the aquatic program include the configuration of the pools, the relationships between various aquatic elements, their connection to the exterior and ease of access to each body of water.

### **Main Pool Tank**

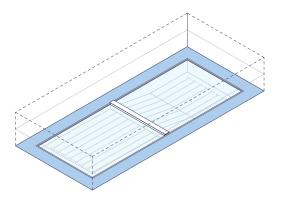
A 50 by 18.5 metre main pool tank with a single movable bulkhead located at the deep end of the main pool tank. The main pool tank includes lifts and a transfer bench for accessibility. Depths at the end of the pool tank have been set to allow diving options up to a 5-metre platform and deep water play features such as a climbing wall and rope swing.

### **Leisure Pool**

The leisure pool area is made up of a 25-metre lane pool plus a leisure and play area. Its position in the corner of the natatorium provides a connection to the surrounding exterior environment.

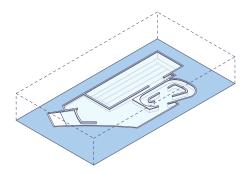
The 25-metre tank has been configured to accommodate a wide range of programming. Its movable floor allows swim lessons for different age groups and a range of therapy functions to be accommodated in this area. A hinged ramp and collapsible stairs provide access to the variable depth area within the warm lanes.

The leisure and play area includes a tot area with zero-depth entry and an enlarged zone for leisure activities that contains a range of water play features. A full lazy river is also included to accommodate play and



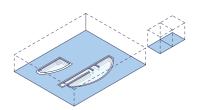
### **Main Pool Tank**

- 18.5m x 50m tank, 8 lanes
- · Movable bulkhead
- Deep end allows for up to 5m high dive board
- Double-height space



### Leisure Pool Tank

- 8.5m x 25m tank, 4 lanes with movable floor
- · Zero entry beach access
- Lazy river
- Water play features
- · Double-height space



### **Wellness Amenities**

- Large family hot pool with ramp and lift access
- Small hot pool
- Steam room
- Sauna

therapeutic functions. With the zero-depth entry, integrated ramps and lifts, the leisure pool provides seamless access for a range of abilities.

### **Hot Pools**

The larger and cooler of the two hot pools is intended for a mix of play and therapeutic activities. Ramp and lift access has been provided for this hot pool.

A smaller and warmer hot pool is included for therapeutic and wellness activities. Its location provides separation from the active leisure zone and connection to the park and adjacent trees. A transfer bench and lift access are included for this hot pool.

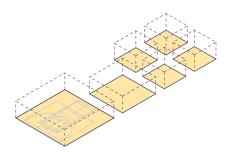
### Steam and Sauna

Steam and sauna rooms have been planned with views to the exterior. Their proximity to the hot pools creates a wellness and therapeutic zone in the natatorium.

### **Other Spaces and Features**

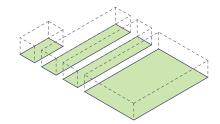
Aquatic storage occupies a large amount of the space within the natatorium. This has been located adjacent to the Main and Leisure pools to provide ease of access for play accessories and pool equipment. Bleacher seating has been integrated along the main pool tank for swim meets and events and a viewing area has been included at the upper level, overlooking the leisure pool.

# 3b - Project Program



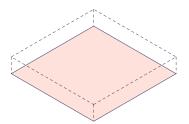
### **Multipurpose Rooms**

- · Half gym
- · Dance/yoga studio
- · Seniors room
- Aquatic multipurpose room
- Child minding room
- Art room



### Changerooms

- · Universal change
- · Women's aquatic change
- Men's aquatic change
- Dryland Change



### **Fitness**

- Cardio machines
- Strength machines
- Stretching / balls
- Fitness open area
- Consultation rooms

### **Dryland Area**

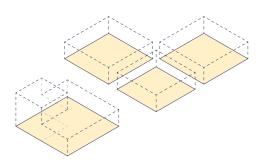
Important considerations for the dryland program areas include connectivity to the exterior, user experience, improving functionality, reducing circulation and simplifying wayfinding.

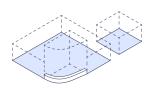
### **Reception, Lobby and Control Point**

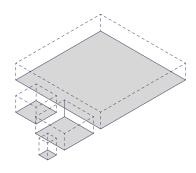
Users entering the lobby have a clear line of sight to both the reception and the pool area, creating a visual connection throughout the facility.

The desire to pull programs away from the exterior wall and enhance visual connection to the street and park resulted in the creation of an interior grouping adjacent to the main entry that includes multipurpose rooms, washrooms and administration areas. The zone between this interior volume and the exterior wall is occupied by the lobby, control point and primary circulation spaces. Beyond enhancing visual connectivity, this interior volume also serves as a significant wayfinding device between the lobby, natatorium, vertical circulation and other spaces at street level.

The lobby is located before the control point, creating a freely accessible gathering space that encourages community members to use the facility for social connection.







### **Lobby and Circulation**

- Double-height space with visual connection levels 1 and 2
- Visual connection to natatorium
- Community living room
- Control point
- Accessible routes of travel to all building areas
- Tactile wayfinding to aid all users
- · Clearly visible vertical circulation

### **Administration**

- Reception
- · Lifeguard station
- · Admin meeting room
- · Admin offices

### **Service Areas**

- Loading Bay
- Pool Mechanical
- · Building Mechanical
- Workshop

### **Change Rooms**

Past the control point, a large universal change room and gendered change rooms accommodate the needs of a wide range of users.

The universal change room is a universal space meaning that all washrooms, shower stalls and dry change stalls are independent private units. Privacy measures have also been incorporated within the gendered change rooms to enhance inclusivity.

### **Fitness Area**

The fitness area occupies a majority of the street facade on level 2 to maintain its role as an active beacon to the community and allow users to look out onto activity on the street below. The fitness area layout is designed to improve functionality and long term flexibility.

The fitness area is mostly located above lobby, circulation and changeroom space, mitigating concerns about the transmission of sound and vibrations to level 1 programs. An acoustically isolated floor system has been included to further reduce the passage of sound and vibrations to level 1 spaces.

### **Multipurpose Rooms**

Recreation staff undertook a review of anticipated programming and recommended a series of different multipurpose rooms to accommodate current and projected needs of the community. Based on their recommendations, the following spaces have been included in the current designs.

# 3b - Project Program

- Half Gym configured as a space for active recreation and large social gatherings with a sprung wood floor for active uses.
- **Dance/Yoga studio** a smaller room with a sprung floor to accommodate dance and other active programs.
- **Seniors room** designed to accommodate seniors programming including games, presentations and community lunches, located close to the entry for ease of access.
- **General multipurpose rooms** located next to the pool area and suitable for wet activities including aquatic training and birthday parties.
- **Child minding room** a small room that can be used for child minding and programming.
- **Arts room** designed to accommodate arts programming.

All multipurpose rooms include storage for furniture and equipment required for their range of programs. Additionally, kitchenettes have been provided in the seniors room and the general multipurpose rooms to support anticipated uses.

### Administration

The primary administration spaces are located at the corner of the building. This allows the public circulation spaces to occupy the edge of the building, increasing the visibility of activities and enhancing the indoor-outdoor connection.

### **Circulation Areas**

Circulation areas were carefully reviewed through the design development process with the aim of reducing area, simplifying paths of movement and ensuring clear wayfinding. Primary vertical circulation elements including the main stair and elevator have been located at the corner of the building.

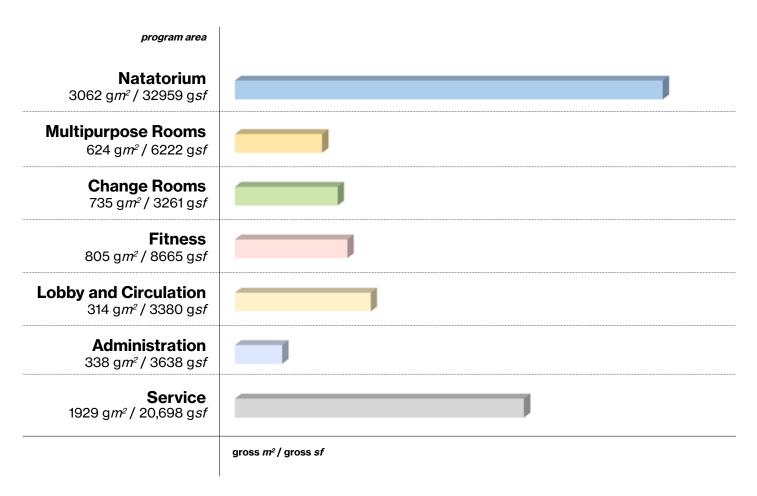
Vertical circulation elements are clearly visible to users moving through the control point at street level. As users arrive at level 2, they are situated at the head of the main circulation path that connects all level 2 programs. There is a simple and clear path through the building that connects all major program elements.

Tactile wayfinding and contrasting colours are being considered at all interior and exterior paths of movement to aid those with limited vision.

### **Service Areas**

The basement contains most of the required service areas including mechanical rooms, electrical rooms, storage areas and a workshop. Additional loading, garbage and chemical storage areas are located at street level. Loading of chemicals and equipment will occur at street level and a mechanical lift or hoist will assist moving these to the basement when required.

An acoustically screened enclosure is also located on the roof that contains major mechanical equipment serving the natatorium and upper-level dry land programs.



Program Composition, This program results in a total gross area of 8520-8600m2.

# 3c - Design Principles

### **Design - Architectural**

The design for each of option has been developed with the five Project Principles of the project, outlined in section 3a. All options have been designed to meet and exceed certifications from the Rick Hansen Foundation and CaGBC -Zero Carbon Building to meet goals for accessibility and sustainability.

The design for each option is similar with the prominent use of glazed curtain wall for the for the main building envelope material along with solid sections to reduce envelope costs. This creates a pavilion like structure that is characterized by simple and transparent vertical walls supporting a visually bold horizontal surface at the roof. Transparency ensures uninterrupted visual connections between the exterior and interior. The roof plane serves as a visual connector between the dryland and natatorium areas and as a unifying element for the entire design. To reach the goals for an efficient and sustainable building, high performance double glazing along with careful detailing is to be used to minimized thermal bridging. To mitigate unwanted solar gains, vertical fins are integrated into the curtain wall system along the east, south and west elevations. The desire is for a simple and clean building façade, as such the design will be carefully detailed to integrate all building components including structural elements, mechanical elements and solar control shades, along with the termination of finishes and interior elements.

Each option will accommodate an exterior entry plaza that allows for clear legibility of the main entrance and public lobby, with an opportunity for the public lobby to house a coffee shop or vending machines that can cater to both the lobby and the outdoor plaza area.

Each option will employ generous glazed facades surrounding the fitness and pool areas to enhance the user experience, showcase the many activities supported inside and attract the wider public. The glazed exterior also provides eyes on the street and an increased sense of safety for the immediate surrounding.

### **Design - Structural**

The structural scheme for all options includes a concrete raft slab foundation bearing directly on bedrock at portions of the building and at other areas a raft slab supported on caissons depending on subgrade conditions. The pool tanks will be formed with concrete retaining walls supported by the raft slab below and support L1 suspended concrete slab. The cast in place concrete floor slabs of Level 1 and level 2 are supported by concrete columns and walls. The roof is a metal deck over steel beams and trusses.

With the adoption of the new BCBC-2024 in March 2024, the design that was developed during the Design Development phase in 2019 will need to be slightly updated. This is to meet the requirements for increased seismic force resisting systems. Conceptual analysis of future seismic loading requirements has resulted in relatively minor changes to building design and have been incorporated.

### **Design - Mechanical**

The proposed mechanical systems are a crucial aspect in meeting the project principle of efficiency and sustainability. All 3 options will include the same mechanical components to substantially reduce the carbon footprint of the building in comparison to the existing facility and provide a zero-carbon-consuming facility. The mechanical systems will generally be housed indoors, in the basement to serve the building. To mitigate noise from air handling equipment on the roof to the surrounding area, it is proposed that these systems also be located underground and acoustically treated. One of the major components in reaching net-zero carbon impact is by using air-source heat pumps for HVAC and pool heating rather than using gas-fired boilers.

### **Design - Electrical**

The building will only have electric power, allowing for all energy to be renewable and a zero-emissions building. The major component to this is the use of air-source heat pumps for HVAC and pool heating.

The power system is designed to address all anticipated future power requirements of the facility, with minimum 25% spare capacity. A 3-phase 25kV BC Hydro primary service into the property is required with an onsite transformer to step voltage down to 347/600 volts. In addition to the primary electrical service to the building a 250kW diesel generator would be included for emergency and standby power.

In an aim to reduce energy consumption of the building, all interior and exterior lighting will be LED. Occupant sensors will be used to control lighting automatically in all intermittently used areas. Additionally, the design of the building embraces the use of daylight to reduce energy consumption but also as a natural and healthy form of light to enhance the environment. All exterior lighting will meet illumination requirements for creating a safe outdoor space at night for pedestrians and the community. Exterior lighting will also ensure the elimination of light pollution by minimizing light spillage into neighbouring areas and helping local nocturnal wildlife.

One other electrical system to aid in the use of renewable energy is the implementation of a photovoltaic solar panel system. This would be a 216kW array mounted flat to the roof to offset energy cost of the building by approximately \$1885 per month and have a payback period of 20-25 years.

# 3d - Operational Impact

RC Strategies was engaged as part of this study to evaluate the operational financial impacts of a new facility. This assessment builds on their previous work, completed in 2017 during an earlier phase of this project. Their work highlights the significance of the Guiding and Design Principles in the context of financial performance. This section includes assumptions and context outlined in the 2017 report and considers new implications based on what has and has not changed since 2017.

### **Aquatic Facility Operating Context**

Due to their significant community benefits, public aquatic swimming facilities are typically quite highly subsidized. In addition to taxpayers having to contribute to the capital costs of indoor pools, the typical recovery rate for an indoor pool in Canada is between 30% and 60%, with tax revenue subsidizing the remainder of operating costs.

### **Facility Utilization**

The existing facility accommodates an estimated 300,000 swims annually with an annual capacity for about 690,000 swims, using only about 43% of the available swimming capacity. While prime hours were almost fully utilized, there was a significant amount of unused capacity during off-peak periods. Space constraints prevent any significant amount of additional use despite the unmet need for more swimming in the City. In other words, new and different types of aquatic spaces were required to accommodate all current and future outstanding needs.

### **Capacity and Demand**

There was a demonstrated current need for an additional 66,000 swims per year in the City that the existing facility was unable to meet, and that number would grow in the longer term as the City continued to grow.

The outstanding need in Victoria was largely in the areas of recreational and fitness swimming as well as rehabilitation and therapy swims. These aquatic services had been growing in most cities across Canada and are likely to continue growing in the foreseeable future.

In the longer-term, the total number of annual swims was projected at 4.3 swims per capita, a conservative projection which is at the lower end of what is expected in indoor public pools in Canadian urban centres.

### **Operating Costs**

Like all other indoor public pools in Canada, the existing facility was operating at a net deficit of about \$4.90 per swim, for a total annual operating deficit of about \$2.65 million.

The proposed new facility would be better able to accommodate existing and future demand and would operate more efficiently. Since the 2017 report, improved energy savings, better use of floor space and accelerated population growth have further improved operating efficiencies.

### **Site Options**

Because the three site options considered in this study are functionally identical, their operating impacts, should be similarly identical. Because the Central Park North site option replaces the existing facility, and requires facility closure during construction, additional impacts have been identified:

- 1. Building services and maintenance opertional cost savings can be realized.
- 2. It will likely be possible to relocate many of the current swims (mostly in the swim training and program categories) to other pools in the region. However, during the shutdown a large portion of the total annual swims will simply disappear. It could take one or more years once a new pool is open to recapture those swims, gradually rising to the projected swim rates. During that recapture period, the operating deficit will likely be slightly higher than is projected herein as an ongoing savings.



Existing Crystal Pool used largely for recreational and fitness swimming as well as rehabilitation and therapy swims.

# 3e - Vehicle and Bicycle Parking

WATT Consulting conducted a traffic impact analysis that considered other regional aquatic facilities, industry best practices and the City's bylaws and regulations. Their analysis determined that there would be a parking demand of 1 vehicle per 30m2 of floor area of the new facility which translates to a parking demand of 262 vehicles for each of the site options.

### **On-site Parking Stalls**

For this study, City staff directed the project to include 110 on-site vehicle parking stalls (+/- 5 stalls). In 2018, Council directed staff to explore parking alternatives that ensured no net loss of green space. As such underground parking has been included for all options.

Each of the options also include the following parking types:

- 5 accessible parking stalls plus 2 vanaccessible parking stalls (all accessible stalls should be EV ready)
- 6 level-3 EV charging stations
- 6 level-2 EV charging stations
- 4 dedicated car-share stalls with access to level-2 EV charging stations
- All remaining general stalls should be designed as level-2 EV-ready

### **On-site Bicycle Parking Stalls**

Minimum long- and short-term bicycle parking requirements are dictated by the current zoning bylaws and calculated based on the building area. A total of 100 bike stalls are included with each option consisting of 56 short-term covered, 20 short-term open and 24 long-term secure bike parking spaces. This exceeds long-term bicycle parking requirements by 25%.

More specifics on bicycle parking include:

- Long-term bicycle parking to include a minimum of 25% of parking stalls for oversized/cargo bicycles or personal mobility devices
- 10% of stalls with access to electric charging
- Stacked bicycle parking to be limited to no more than 50% of required bicycle parking
- Stacked bicycle parking to include lift assist

### **Off-site Parking Stalls**

The surface parking at Save on Food Memorial Centre and street parking will be used to make up for an expected demand for vehicle parking above and beyond the on-site parking stalls provided. Loading zones are not included in parking counts.

# 3f - Review of External Regulations and Best Practices

### **British Columbia Building Code**

British Columbia Building Code (BCBC) 2012, was applicable during the schematic and design development phases of the project (2017 – 2019). The current code, BCBC2024, was adopted on March 8th, 2024. Changes that will affect the construction of the planned facility include:

- new seismic and site-specific geotechnical considerations
- new minimum spatial requirements for accessibility embedded into the code
- new energy efficiency standards

Accessibility and energy code changes have limited effects on the planned facility given that the project exceeds those thresholds with a design that seeks to meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification and the CAGBC - Zero Carbon Building Initiative.

# Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC)

Careful consideration was given to accessibility and inclusivity of the new facility with those factors embedded into the project principles. The accessibility focus extends beyond consideration for those with physical disabilities to also include those with sensory and cognitive disabilities. The pursuit of the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) means that the new facility will go beyond minimum code compliance for accessibility delivering meaningful access for all.

### **CaGBC - Zero Carbon Building Initiative**

In keeping with the City of Victoria Climate Action Plan, the project includes a low carbon strategy for the new facility using an all-electric system for space and water heating with the intent to obtain design certification under the CaGBC Zero Carbon Building Program.

# 3g - Visualizations



Lobby



Fitness Centre



Natatorium

## **Conceptual Visualizations**

These artistic conceptual visualizations imagine the new facility as a light-filled, welcoming and universally accessible community facility.

# Appendix 2 - Central Park North Concept Design

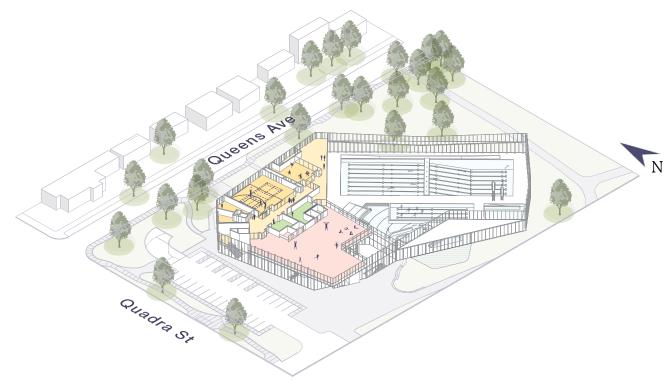


# 4a - Central Park North

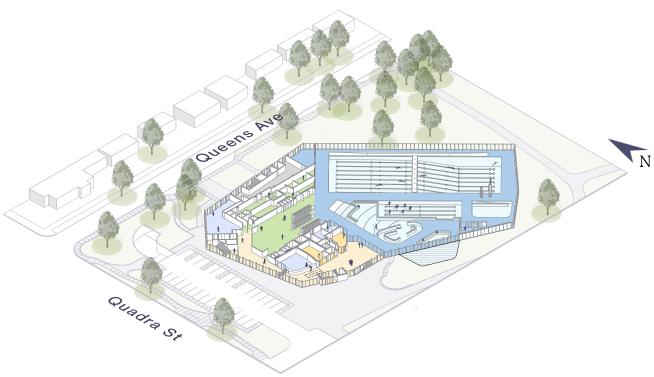
The layout of the Central Park North site is very similar to the Central Park South option, with the floor plan mirrored to maintain the same desirable relationships between the interior spaces and the park. A carefully modulated shape allows the building to fit between the existing trees. Because the building location is impacted by the existing footprint, it is a bit further set back from Quadra St., and a bit more exposed inside the park. This design concept was adjusted slightly to articulate the massing with varying roof heights, becoming lower towards the centre of the park.



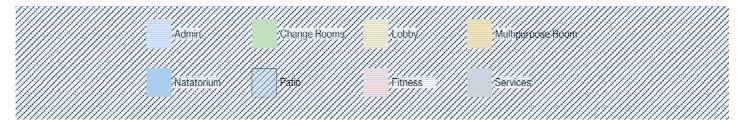
Central Park North Site



Central Park North Level 2



Central Park North Level 1



## 4a - Central Park North

## **Site and Design**

This option locates the facility at the northwest corner of Central Park, which is located between Quadra St., Vancouver St., Oueens Ave., and Pembroke St. Central Park is generally flat with a 3m drop in grade between Pembroke St., and Queens Ave. Preliminary geotechnical review found variable ground conditions across the site that is composed of clay and glacial till. It is expected that bedrock will be within 0.7m below grade at the west side and 12.2m below grade to the east side of the site. Central Park is zoned as a PB. Public Buildings District, and does not require any rezoning or development permit prior to issuing a building permit application or starting construction.

Central Park is a recreation and wellness hub for the North Park neighbourhood and Victoria as a whole, with basketball and tennis courts, baseball diamonds, a playground and exercise equipment in addition to the existing Crystal Pool facility. The park features numerous mature trees adding to Victoria's urban forest.

This site option is predominantly designed within the footprint of the existing pool facility to limit the amount of additional excavation required for the project. The exterior façade has a more conventional linear and faceted design to simplify the footprint and construction of the building in the aim to be a positive for the project budget.

The building is designed to be a pavilion in the park, reducing impact to the existing trees by building upon the footprint of the existing facility. From the natatorium, the building's

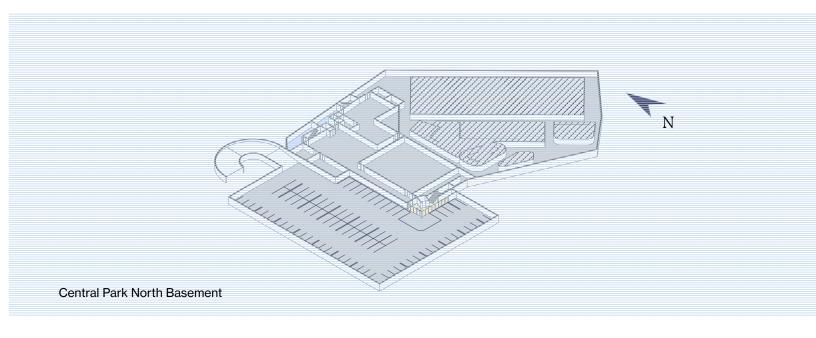
transparency ensures uninterrupted visual connections to the trees, enhancing the connection to the park. The entrance is located at the southwest corner of the building opening up onto a public plaza that connects to the park.

## **Mobility Impacts**

Central Park is situated between Quadra St., an arterial road and frequent transit route, and Vancouver St., a local street and all ages and abilities bike route. Transit stops are located within 30m of the building entrance. A pathway through the park, aligned with Princess Ave., will improve access through the park to Vancouver St. To improve vehicle access and road safety, access to the on-site parking and drop-off zones would be aligned with a new four-way traffic signal at Princess Ave. and Quadra St. The service entrance and delivery zone would be on Queens Ave.

On-site vehicle parking consists of 110 vehicle parking stalls including accessible parking – 28 surface and 82 underground. This parking is located in the northwest corner of the site with the surface parking above the underground parkade. Additional off-site vehicle parking nearby is made up of surface parking lots at Save on Food Memorial Centre and Royal Athletic Park.

The 100 bicycle parking spots will consist of 20 short-term open within 10m of the entrance plus 56 covered short-term and 24 covered long-term secure located within the park at 45m from the entrance.



Admin///////	Change Rooms/// 2Lobby/////	/// Multiduroose/Boord/////	
Natatorium////X///X	<b>2/2010/////////////////////////////////</b>	///, /Services////////////	



Excerpt from the Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Feasibility Study Report (2024)

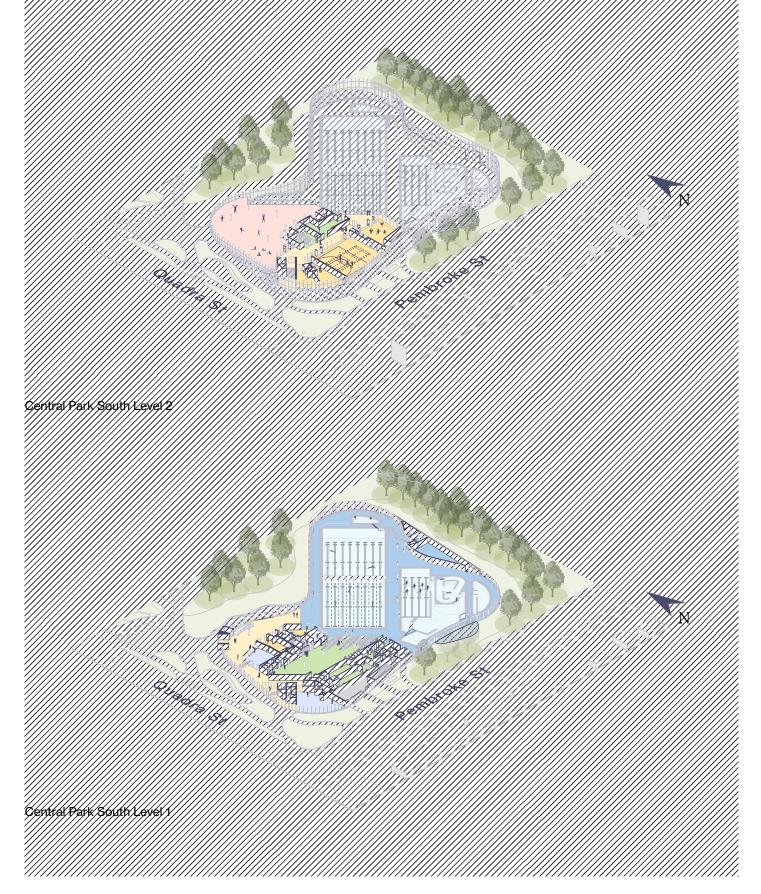


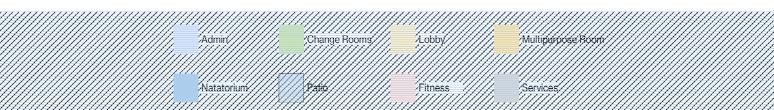
# 4b - Central Park South

The design concept for the Central Park South site can be characterized as a welcoming and light-filled pavilion in the park. With a simple massing without modulation of building height, it is distinguished by a smoothly articulated floor plan shape that nestles itself into a clearing between and around the trees in the south-west quadrant of the park, currently occupied by the tennis and basketball courts. This concept was derived to focus on the user experience of swimming and working out amongst the trees.



Central Park South Site





## 4b - Central Park South

## **Site and Design**

This option locates the facility at the southwest corner of Central Park, which is located between Quadra St, Vancouver St, Oueens Ave and Pembroke St. Central Park is generally flat with a 3m drop in grade between Pembroke St and Queens Ave. Preliminary geotechnical review found variable ground conditions across the site that is composed of clay and glacial till. It is expected that bedrock will be within 0.7m below grade at the west side and 12.2m below grade to the east side of the site. Central Park is zoned as a PB. Public Buildings District, and does not require any rezoning or development permit prior to issuing a building permit application or starting construction.

Central Park is a recreation and wellness hub for the North Park neighbourhood and Victoria as a whole, with basketball and tennis courts, baseball diamonds, a playground and exercise equipment in addition to the existing Crystal Pool facility. The park features numerous mature trees adding to Victoria's urban forest.

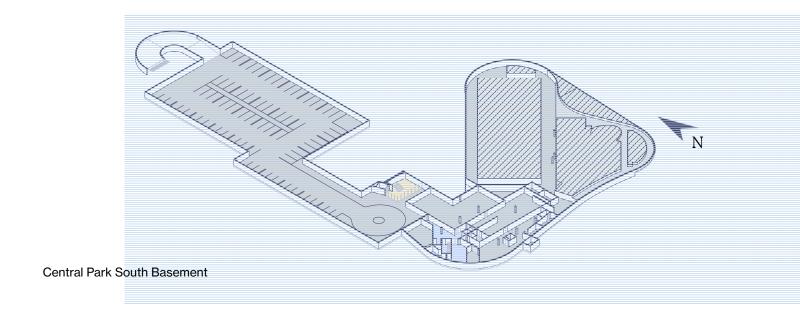
This option uses the design developed in 2019 with slight reworking to current building code including structural elements for seismic restraint. The building is designed to sit within the park like a pavilion and limits impact to the existing trees by occupying an existing clearing and curving the building around protected trees. From the natatorium, the building's transparency ensures uninterrupted visual connections to the trees, enhancing the connection to the park. The entrance is located at the northwest corner of the building opening up onto a public plaza that connects to the park.

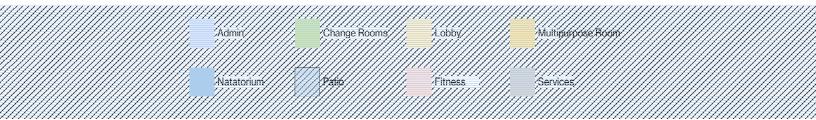
## **Mobility Impacts**

Central Park is situated between Quadra St., an arterial road and frequent transit route, and Vancouver St., a local street and all ages and abilities bike route. Transit stops are located within 30m of the building entrance. A pathway through the park, aligned with Princess Ave., will improve access through the park to Vancouver St. To improve vehicle access and road safety, access to the on-site parking and drop-off zones would be aligned with a new four-way traffic signal at Princess Ave. and Quadra St. The service entrance and delivery zone would be on Pembroke St.

On-site vehicle parking consists of 110 vehicle parking stalls including accessible parking – 28 surface and 82 underground. This parking is located in the northwest corner of the site with the surface parking above the underground parkade. Additional off-site vehicle parking nearby is made up of surface parking lots at Save on Food Memorial Centre and Royal Athletic Park. During the demolition of the existing pool facility and construction of onsite parking, 35-39 temporary on street parking stalls would be made available along Queens Avenue and Pembroke Street.

The 100 bicycle parking spots will consist of 20 short-term open within 10m of the entrance plus 56 covered short-term and 24 covered long-term secure located within the park at 45m from the entrance.







## **Total Project Budget**

The table below presents the Total Project Budget required to construct the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre at the three proposed sites.

The Total Project Budget accounts for all expenses related to design, construction, equipment, and commissioning cost estimates. These costs are consistent across all options, reflecting general uniformity in amenities, features and gross building area. Additionally, the budget includes an allowance for construction market escalation to mitigate the impacts of inflation and anticipated market increases.

As part of a comprehensive risk management strategy, the Total Project Budget was developed in collaboration with two quantity surveyors and cost management firms: LEC Group and Advicas Group. Both firms are based locally and have extensive experience in the construction industry across British Columbia. Furthermore, oversight of the budget development process was provided by Turnbull Construction Project Managers.

The table below does not include the alternative options to close the pool at the start of construction for the Central Park South site option and provide partial service continuity at the Crystal Garden building. Opting for closure of the existing facility during construction would decrease the Total Project budget by \$4.1 million for the Central Park South site option.

Project Component	Central Park North	Central Park South
Pre-Construction & Soft Costs	\$17.7	\$16.6
Construction Costs	\$120.0	\$123.4
Post Construction & Commissioning	\$15.7	\$16.1
Contingencies	\$24.0	\$24.7
Escalation	\$31.8	\$31.0
Service Continuity of Existing Facility	N/A	\$4.1
Total Project Budget	\$209.2	\$215.9
Funding from the Debt Reduction Reserve	-\$30.0	-\$30.0
Funding from the Parking Reserve Fund	-\$17.0	-\$17.0
Net Cost Funded by Debt	\$162.2	\$168.9



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# **Purpose**

This report seeks confirmation of the site for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre and direction to proceed with the next phases of the project.



# **Background**

- Council direction to revisit the project given in 2022
- 2024 updated Feasibility Study explored site options and updated cost estimates in preparation for referendum
- Referendum was held on February 8, 2025, results demonstrated public support for funding the project (58.71%) and a clear preference for Central Park North (60.57%)

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3

# **Site Options**

#### **Central Park North**

· Site of existing facility

#### **Central Park South**

 Site of existing playground, sport courts



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# **Project Principles**

The design for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre in either location is a **high-quality health and wellness facility** that is **climate resilient** and **universally accessible.** 

**Inclusive** 



**Accessible** 



Efficient & Sustainable



High-Quality Health & Wellness Facility



Place for Community



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# **Facility Features**



Lobby



**Pools** 

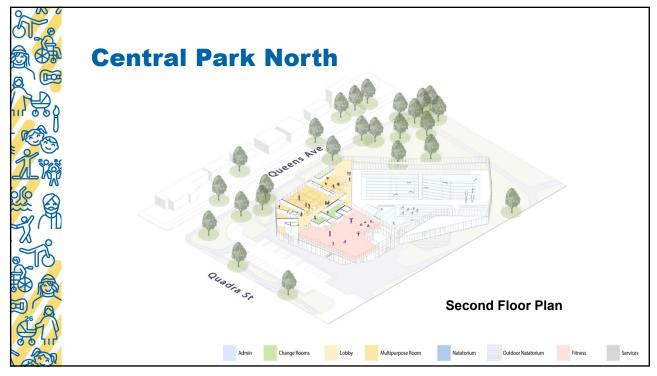


**Fitness Area** 

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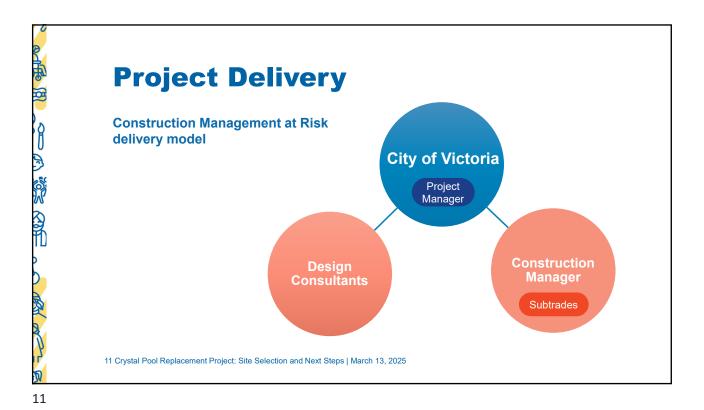


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Financial Summary					
	Central Park North	Central Park South			
Total Project Budget	\$209.2 M	\$215.9 M			
Debt Reduction Reserve funds	-\$30.0 M	-\$30.0 M			
Infrastructure Reserve funds	-\$17.0 M	-\$17.0 M			
Net Cost Funded by Debt	\$162.2 M	\$168.9 M			
·					

**Options and Impacts Total project Pool closed** Courts and **Shorter Fewer trees NORTH** budget overall during playground to be replaced \$209.2 million construction construction open during construction Basketball **Total project Pool may More** trees Longer SOUTH budget overall remain court relocated to be replaced construction open during during \$215.9 million construction construction 10 Crystal Pool Replacement Project: Site Selection and Next Steps | March 13, 2025



Risk Management

Risk Mitigation Strategy

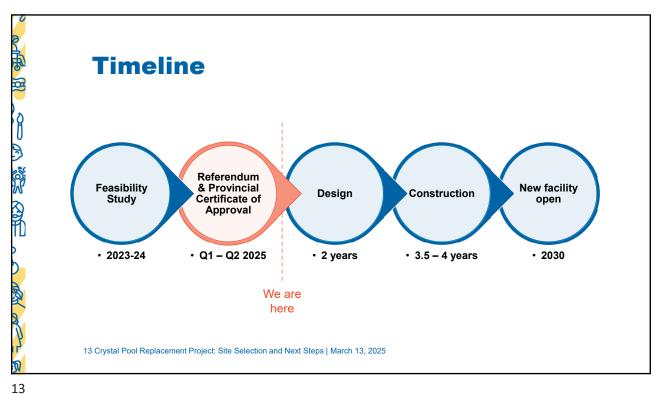
Proceed with referendum-approved design
Use a decision-making framework

Market Uncertainty

Strategic procurements
Material substitutions
Contractual safeguards

Early planning and clear communication
Support for staff and patrons
Work with regional partners

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## **Recommendations**

#### That Council:

- a. Designate Central Park North as the site for the new Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre, with a project budget of \$209.2 million; and
- b. Direct staff to procure the necessary resources to initiate the next phases of the project, with the design aligned with the Basis of Design (Appendix 1) and the Central Park North Design Concept (Appendix 2), once the funding Certificate of Approval is received from the Province of B.C; and
- c. Instruct staff to provide regular project updates to Council and the public; and
- d. Forward this recommendation to the Council meeting on March 13 for consideration.

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### **Committee of the Whole Report**

For the Meeting of March 13, 2025

To: Committee of the Whole Date: March 6, 2025

Derrick Newman, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities

From: Adam Sheffield, Manager, Operations, Bylaw Services

Tom Zworski, City Solicitor

**Subject:** Sheltering in Parks and the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* 

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council instruct the City Solicitor to bring forward the necessary bylaw amendments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* to:

- a. replace the definition of "homeless person" with "person experiencing homelessness" that better conforms to recent court decisions,
- b. define "temporary overnight shelter" to expressly limit it, in accordance with court decisions, to overhead protection used by persons experiencing homelessness to prevent exposure to the elements,
- c. clarify the existing regulations related to temporary overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness,
- d. increase the distance between playgrounds and locations of temporary overnight shelters from 8 metres to 15 metres,
- e. expressly prohibit sheltering in all parks, except in the limited circumstances as directed by court decisions in the following parks:
  - i. Alexander Park,
  - ii. Alston Green,
  - iii. Banfield Park,
  - iv. Barnard Park,
  - v. Begbie Green,
  - vi. Begbie Parkway,
  - vii. Blackwood Green,
  - viii. Bushby Park,
  - ix. Chapman Park,
  - x. Charles Redfern Park,
  - xi. Clawthorpe Avenue Park,

- xii. Clover Point.
- xiii. Ernest Todd Park,
- xiv. Fisherman's Wharf Park,
- xv. Gonzales Beach Park,
- xvi. Gower Park,
- xvii. Holland Point Park,
- xviii. Jackson Street Park,
- xix. Johnson Street Green,
- xx. Lime Bay Park,
- xxi. Mary Street Park,
- xxii. Mayfair Green/Tolmie Park,
- xxiii. Oaklands Park,
- xxiv. Olive Street Green,
- xxv. Oswald Park,
- xxvi. Pemberton Park,
- xxvii. Redfern Park,
- xxviii. Rupert Terrace Green,
- xxix. Scurrah Green,
- xxx. Selkirk Green,
- xxxi. Shelbourne Green,
- xxxii. Sitkum Park,
- xxxiii. Songhees Hillside Park, and
- xxxiv. William Stevenson Memorial Park
- f. expressly prohibit any local government or public authority from directing any person experiencing homelessness to shelter in a park or transferring or transporting any person experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to Victoria without first securing for them accessible shelter or housing.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As requested by Council, this report provides a comprehensive overview on the status of overnight sheltering in City parks and makes recommendations for updates to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* provisions dealing with overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness. The recommendations seek to balance the competing uses and policy objectives around the City's limited parks and open spaces.

The report is divided into the following subsections, with appendices containing more detailed information.

#### **Background**

- i. Introduction
- ii. Impact of Adams decision on approach to homelessness
- iii. Regulation and management of sheltering in Victoria
- iv. Impacts of Temporary Overnight Sheltering
  - 1. Impact on parks systems and all users of parks
  - 2. Budgetary impacts

- v. City initiatives to support unsheltered community
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  - 2. Parks Relocation Coordinator
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#### **Issues and Analysis**

- i. Authority and responsibility for support of the unsheltered population
  - 1. Provincial authority and responsibility
  - 2. Federal authority and responsibility
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- ii. Role of urban parks
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- iv. Status of the law with respect to temporary overnight sheltering
  - Recognition that under certain circumstances municipalities cannot prohibit all overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness
  - 2. Availability of accessible shelter space
  - 3. Legislative authority to select parks for overnight sheltering
  - 4. No positive obligation upon municipalities to provide supports
  - 5. International law
- v. Assessing quantitative need for temporary overnight sheltering in parks
  - 1. Point in Time counts ("PiT counts")
  - 2. Structure Counts by the City
- vi. Assessing Current Capacity
  - 1. Indoor Shelters
  - 2. Lawful outdoor temporary shelter space
- vii. Conclusions on Need & Capacity
- viii. Role of City Regulations

#### **Options & Impacts**

#### **Conclusions**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's December 5, 2024 motion directing staff to report back on the status of overnight sheltering in City parks and make recommendations for updates to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* provisions dealing with overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness in light of the City's experience during the past 15 years.

#### **BACKGROUND**

#### i. Introduction

We are in a homelessness crisis. Chronic homelessness is a reality affecting our community, the province and the country. Homelessness has many causes – poverty, addiction, mental health issues, inadequate health care, diminishing social cohesion, fading collective compassion, personal and intergenerational trauma, abusive relationships within households, rising rent, income inequality and increasing disparity between groups, particularly Indigenous and disabled populations who are far more likely to experience homelessness than the general population.

Local governments cannot address the health, economic and social root causes of homelessness, nor are they able to provide housing for all who need it. However, municipalities are on the frontlines of this crisis, managing its effects on housed and unhoused residents. Most persons experiencing homelessness live within municipal boundaries and shelter, as best as they can, on municipally-owned property. Provincially and federally-owned properties have been perceived or actively rendered as off-limits for this activity.

In 2008, the BC Supreme Court declared that the City's absolute prohibition on erection of shelters in parks and other public places contravened the constitutionally protected rights of persons experiencing homelessness. As a result, the City amended its *Parks Regulation Bylaw* to provide an exception for "homeless persons" from the general prohibition on erection of overnight shelters in the parks. Following these amendments, sheltering in City parks increased significantly. This increase in sheltering had a profound effect on our park system as a whole and on City operations and budgets.

#### ii. Impact of the Adams decision on approach to homelessness

Sheltering in parks is not a solution to homelessness. Sheltering in parks limits homeless persons' access to health and social services and exposes them to the health hazards associated with sheltering outdoors. No one should have to sleep outside. Over the past 16 years since the *Adams* decision, City staff have had countless interactions with persons sheltering in City parks. What is clear from those interactions is that adequate health services and social supports, in addition to indoor shelters and housing, are critical components towards a solution to the homelessness crisis in our parks.

Unfortunately, following the 2008 court decision in the *Adams* case, many viewed sheltering in City parks as an answer to homelessness. While not an official policy or strategy, a common response of many other local governments and public agencies, when confronted with persons experiencing homelessness, appears to have been: "let them shelter in Victoria parks". This attitude continues to be prevalent to this day.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Adams v Victoria (City), 2008 BCSC 1363 {00171195:2}

Although no formal statistics are available, there are numerous examples of this in practice, including the following incidents in the last several months:

- 1. City staff encountered individuals getting off a bus and seeking directions to Beacon Hill Park. In the course of the subsequent conversation, it was revealed that they had been sent by another local government, with brand new luggage and one-way tickets, from an encampment in the Lower Mainland, and directed to shelter in a Victoria park;
- 2. Patients with ongoing medical conditions have been released from hospital care to a Victoria park and provided with a doctor's note directed to Bylaw Services requesting that the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* prohibition on daytime sheltering not be enforced against them because of their ongoing medical conditions; and
- 3. Individuals experiencing homelessness, upon being released from care or custody in neighbouring municipalities have been transferred to Victoria parks to shelter there.

There has been inadequate effort by responsible levels of government to address the true causes of homelessness or to implement effective strategies to address homelessness. As a result, the City must manage the impacts of homelessness on the community and its park system.

#### iii. Regulation and management of sheltering in Victoria

Since the amendments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* following the *Adams* decision, Council has engaged in regular review of the bylaw for the purpose of balancing the practically incompatible uses of parks for traditional park purposes (e.g., recreation, sports, children's play areas, environmental preservation, etc.) and parks as overnight sheltering sites. For ease of reference, an index of amendments that have been made to the bylaw since 2009 is attached as Appendix 1.

Prior to the pandemic, the number of individuals seeking temporary overnight shelter in Victoria was relatively stable. Prior to the declared state of emergency related to COVID-19 on March 18, 2020, there were approximately 24 to 35 shelter structures in City parks on a regular basis.

In 2020, in response to the state of emergency and related social distancing and self-isolation advisories, the City suspended enforcement of the prohibition on daytime sheltering.

By April 2020, the number of temporary shelters in City parks had increased to an estimated 465.

In May 2020, Council resolved that structures used for outdoor sheltering were not required to be removed during the day in City parks where sheltering was not prohibited. On September 14, 2020, Council adopted amendments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* which authorized daytime sheltering in parks, subject to certain limitations with respect to size, distancing, etc.

Over the spring and summer of 2020, 334 people who were previously sheltering outdoors were provided with indoor shelter by BC Housing.

On February 20, 2021, Bylaw staff performed a count of shelter structures in City parks and identified 182 such structures. On March 28, 2021, Bylaw staff identified that there were 165 individuals experiencing homelessness and sheltering in a City park or public place. Most of these people were sheltering in City parks.

On April 24, 2020, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General issued Ministerial Order M128, ordering the evacuation of Topaz Park and Pandora Avenue between Blanshard Street and Chambers Street, as well as Oppenheimer Park in Vancouver. The Order stated in the preamble that "the Province of British Columbia has developed a comprehensive plan in consultation with the Cities of Vancouver and Victoria, associated police, fire and other agencies, non-government organizations and other stakeholders, to provide adequate alternative living arrangements and other health and social supports for persons currently residing in the Encampments, including the care of their personal property".<sup>2</sup>

On March 11, 2021, David Eby (then the Attorney General and Minister of Housing) announced that the Province had secured a sufficient number of temporary indoor housing and shelter spaces for all people sheltering outside in Victoria. On March 18, 2021, Council resolved to repeal the suspension of the daytime sheltering prohibition.

As part of a coordinated effort with BC Housing, peer support workers and other community partners, as of May 21, 2021, all 165 people identified by Bylaw staff as experiencing homelessness and sheltering in a City park or public place had been offered an indoor living space.

Between January and May of 2021, more than 220 people moved indoors from nine City parks. In total, in the approximately 12-month period between spring/summer 2020 and May 2021, the total number of individuals moved from outdoor sheltering to indoor housing was 564.

The COVID-19 provincial state of emergency ended on July 1, 2021. On July 20, 2021, there were 11 shelter structures in City parks.

In 2023, in an attempt to balance use of public parks between those who shelter in them and those who use them for recreation, physical activity or social pursuits, Council adopted amendments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* that had the effect of prohibiting temporary overnight sheltering at:

- Beacon Hill Park
- Central Park
- Stadacona Park
- Regatta Park
- Hollywood Park
- Topaz Park
- Regatta Point Park

In 2024, Council adopted amendments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* which prohibited temporary overnight sheltering in Irving Park and Victoria West Park.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ministerial Order M 128/2020: https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/mo/hmo/m0128\_2020 {00171195:2}

#### iv. Impacts of Temporary Overnight Sheltering

1. Impact on the parks system and all users of the parks

At the time of the *Adams* decision, it was assumed by the Court that overnight sheltering would not interfere with other uses of the parks:

If, on the other hand, a piece of park property is used for someone to sleep at night with shelter, this does not mean that it cannot be used by others for other recreational uses during the day. There is simply no evidence that there is any competition for the public "resource" which the homeless seek to utilize, or that the resource will not remain available to others if the homeless can utilize it.<sup>3</sup>

The City's experience since 2008 shows that this assumption is incorrect. In a vast majority of cases, sheltering activity is incompatible with other park uses. This is because in most instances, even if overnight shelters are taken down during the day, unsheltered individuals and their belongings continue to occupy the park to the exclusion of others. This is particularly of concern in areas such as playgrounds where young park users are present. Bylaw and Parks staff have received numerous complaints related to conflicts associated with sheltering activities in proximity to playgrounds.

City staff regularly witness (and are usually the first responders to) situations or conflicts in public spaces, involving those sheltering outdoors, many of which are distressing to the general public, City staff and those experiencing homelessness, including:

- Individuals who are in significant personal mental distress or crisis, including threats of selfharm or harm to others, erratic behaviour, throwing objects, yelling or screaming;
- Overdose;
- Physical assault, including intimate partner violence;
- Threats of violence against Bylaw officers, the public or other unsheltered individuals;
- Unsafely discarded sharps, including syringes and broken glass;
- Hazardous waste, including human waste and other bodily fluids;
- Hazardous items, including drug paraphernalia, improperly sealed or secured fuel containers, unsafe electrical connections;
- Open drug dealing and open drug consumption; and
- Antisocial behaviour, including inappropriate or foul language, fighting and nudity.

Parks and open spaces have inevitably declined with ongoing damage to the landscape and infrastructure due to impacts from overnight sheltering activities. These impacts have made the parks less attractive and accessible to other users, with areas closed for repairs or due to the unsafe conditions created.

The damage sustained in parks varies. More significant damage includes:

- small fires deliberately lit in park washrooms and small buildings;
- melted security panels;
- electrical boxes and lamp posts tampered with;

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> *Adams*, para. 130 {00171195:2}

- live wires exposed;
- cut locks, doors, fences to access secure areas;
- cut park fences into private property;
- vandalism including human feces spread on sport court facilities, paint dumped on a variety of infrastructure;
- smashed and stolen irrigation systems;
- extensive damage to ecological sensitive sites undergoing restoration efforts;
- damage to landscapes including ripped, cut and broken branches on trees, shrubs and dug up plants; and
- stolen materials including split rail wood fencing, electricity, tools and equipment.

A summary of incidents with photos occurring over the past two years is included in Appendix 2. This significant damage is in addition to the large volumes of garbage and debris left behind when sheltering sites are abandoned, such as hazardous litter (e.g., feces, toilet paper and sharps), graffiti, digging and other more minor impacts.

#### 2. <u>Budgetary impacts</u>

The financial impact of managing temporary overnight sheltering in parks has escalated significantly over the years, affecting multiple City departments, including Bylaw Services, Parks and Public Works. The City has committed substantial direct funding, operational resources and investments to address the operational needs for individuals experiencing homelessness in the community.

A review of the financial impacts shows that the City has spent more than \$10.8 million since 2023 to support the management of impacts associated with sheltering.

#### Bylaw Enforcement Costs

Since 2020, sheltering-related enforcement has increased dramatically, with approximately 80 per cent of Bylaw officer time now dedicated to managing sheltering in public spaces— more than three times higher than pre-pandemic levels, when roughly 20 per cent of officer time was spent on these calls.

This shift has significantly strained resources for both VicPD and Bylaw Services, making it increasingly difficult to meet service demands related to sheltering enforcement in parks and public spaces. As a result, the City's capacity to respond to other bylaw-related matters has been impacted.

Bylaw officers play a critical role in responding to complaints about blocked sidewalks, individuals sheltering in parks or sleeping in public spaces and incidents of social disorder. This expanded role continues to place greater strain on enforcement capacity, further impacting efficiency and operational costs.

Sheltering related operating & maintenance costs

The City has borne a significant financial burden due to the sustained impact of sheltering in parks and public spaces, resulting in damage to infrastructure, environmental degradation and ongoing maintenance costs.

To keep up with rising demands for repairs, maintenance and waste management related to sheltering, the City is spending approximately \$1.5 million per year on additional operating costs in parks, boulevards and streets.

#### Extreme Weather Warming and Cooling Centres

The City has allocated resources to support extreme weather warming and cooling centres, ensuring that vulnerable residents, including persons experiencing homelessness, have access to safe refuge during severe temperature fluctuations. Between 2023 and 2024, the City directed \$163,026 towards the operation of these centres. These facilities provide temporary shelter during extreme heat or cold, offering basic amenities such as seating, hydration and access to washrooms.

#### **Sheltering Related Costs (2023-2024)**

Category	
Bylaw Enforcement Sheltering Related Costs	\$ 7,035,007
Repairs, Maintenance and Waste Disposal	\$ 3,689,270
Extreme Weather Warming and Cooling Centres	\$ 163,026
Total (2023-2024)	\$ 10,887,303

#### v. <u>City initiatives to support unsheltered community</u>

#### 1. <u>City Funded Initiatives to Support Unsheltered Community</u>

The City has made significant financial contributions to initiatives supporting unsheltered individuals, including direct funding, tax exemptions and capital investments. These initiatives aim to provide immediate relief while supporting long-term solutions for housing and social services.

A review of the funding shows that the City has invested nearly \$12.5 million in recent years to address various short- and long-term investments to support the unsheltered community in Victoria. The \$12.5 million is comprised of the following initiatives.

#### Funding for Social Service Providers

- The City has allocated approximately \$3.07 million in direct funding (2023-2024) for operational support for non-profits, including:
  - Funding \$730,000 towards the operation of the Dowler Place "access hub" where unsheltered individuals can be connected with resources including daily needs, health care, housing and addictions treatment.
  - Partnering with Pacifica Housing to fund a Parks Relocation Coordinator program, which successfully assisted in relocating individuals from encampments into indoor shelter and housing.
  - Funding a non-profit to operate and manage a daytime warming shelter on Pandora Avenue in 2024.

#### Permissive Tax Exemptions

- The City has granted permissive tax exemptions for non-profits serving the unhoused in the amount of \$537,171 since 2023.
- Ten-year property tax exemptions for organizations building non-market affordable rental housing and to developers providing market rental housing, through the Affordable Rental Housing Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw, adopted in 2024.

#### 930 Pandora Avenue Property Acquisition for Affordable Housing

Use of City-owned land at 930 Pandora Avenue, acquired in 2020 for a purchase price of \$8.885 million, for the construction of 205 non-market homes, including affordable units and supportive housing units, with construction funded by BC Housing, the Capital Region Housing Corporation and the City.

#### **City-Funded Initiatives to Support Unsheltered Community**

Category		
Funding for Social Service Providers (2023)	\$	936,911
Funding for Social Service Providers (2024)		2,131,677
Permissive Tax Exemptions (Since 2023)		537,171
930 Pandora Ave. Property Acquisition for Affordable Housing (2020)		8,885,000
Total	\$	12,490,759

#### 2. Parks Relocation Coordinator

In August 2023, the City contracted Pacifica Housing Advisory Association ("Pacifica") to provide a "Parks Relocation Coordinator", for the express purpose of assisting individuals sheltering in parks with obtaining indoor shelter or housing. Staff are not aware of any other municipality in Canada that independently funds such a service. For reference, Pacifica's July 28, 2023 initial proposal related to the Parks Relocation Coordinator position is attached to this report as Appendix 3, and Pacifica's December 5, 2024 Extension Proposal is Appendix 4.

Pacifica is one of the largest affordable housing operators on Vancouver Island. It owns or operates 19 properties with subsidized housing units in Greater Victoria and Nanaimo, as well as over 250 units of supportive housing designated for individuals who have faced homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless due to mental health and/or substance use disorders and also operates the Downtown Outreach and Housing Resource Services program.

The Parks Relocation Coordinator role is filled by two Pacifica Outreach Workers ("PRCs"). The PRCs engage in encampment outreach with a housing focus. This is "a systematic approach whereby assessments and referrals are primarily related to finding suitable housing for vulnerable individuals, while connecting them to the supports and resources needed to maintain long term stability".

#### Some of the services the PRCs provide are:

 Assisting with intake, community outreach to specialized populations, referrals and paperwork for basic needs and services, and referrals to community resources;

- Providing advocacy, support, and guidance, including crisis intervention;
- Housing referral services such as contacting and meeting landlords, assisting with housing;
- Applications for market rent, subsidized and supportive housing;
- Interim non-medical case management services during the period of assessment and placement into housing; and,
- Ongoing support services in areas such as financial, personal and home care.

#### Outreach, including:

- Directly engaging with clients where they are situated;
- Completing intake, consent form and assessment of each client;
- Offering a support plan for each client;
- Referring clients to appropriate housing options;
- Referring clients to income assistance and support services as identified by their individualized support plan;
- Providing clients with a rental supplement, where appropriate;
- Providing tenancy support and skills training to support housing stability and independence;
   and,
- Providing follow-up and ongoing support to residents as appropriate for a period of three months, once housed.

In late 2023 and early 2024, the PRCs succeeded in connecting everyone sheltering at Topaz Park, Regatta Point Park, Stadacona Park and Hollywood Park with indoor shelter in advance of the closure by Bylaw, of those parks to temporary overnight sheltering.

During spring and summer of 2024, the PRCs succeeded in connecting everyone who was sheltering at Irving Park and Victoria West Park as of April 18, 2024 (the date of the decision to move forward in closing the parks to temporary overnight sheltering) with indoor shelter.

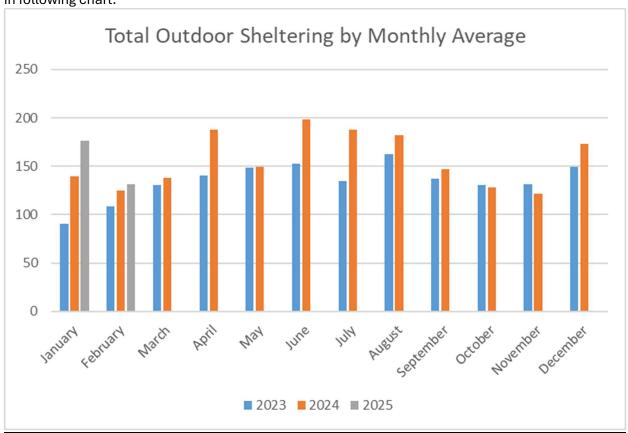
#### vi. Current sheltering activity

The City has developed its own methods for monitoring and documenting sheltering activity in public places. While the number of structures fluctuates due to weather conditions, time of day and location, these observations provide valuable and meaningful metrics for tracking trends over time. Although our methodology has evolved over the years, it continues to serve as an important tool for understanding seasonal patterns and identifying areas of increased sheltering activity.

Recent observations illustrate these fluctuations:

- December–January: Warmer-than-usual winter weather resulted in a higher-than-anticipated number of individuals remaining outdoors.
- February: A prolonged cold weather period activated Emergency Weather Response measures, leading to a decline in structure counts as more individuals moved into temporary indoor shelters.
- Spring–Summer Trends: As warmer weather approaches, sheltering activity is expected to increase, with individuals migrating back outdoors as seasonal conditions improve.
- Long-Term Outlook: Despite ongoing efforts to expand indoor shelter capacity, demand for public space sheltering is expected to persist and increase throughout the spring, summer and fall.

Sheltering activity observations are also influenced by park size, route and duration, and time of the month. Current areas of increased sheltering are observed at Oaklands Park. There is a lower, albeit consistent, sheltering observed at: Pemberton Park, Gonzales Park, Beacon Hill Park and Holland Point Park but is not limited to parks and includes increased levels of sheltering along the Pandora corridor, Queens/Princess area and 500 block of Ellice Street. A summary of sheltering data is provided in following chart.



#### **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

#### i. Authority and responsibility for support for the unsheltered population

Homelessness is a national and provincial crisis, but its consequences are most visible, distressing and damaging at the municipal level. There is widespread confusion among members of the public with respect to the level of government which is ultimately responsible for addressing homelessness and the factors that lead to homelessness. Fortunately, the answers are found within the relevant statutes and have in many instances been confirmed by the courts.<sup>4</sup>

#### Provincial authority and responsibility

#### Health Care

A 2023 report<sup>5</sup> prepared by the Homelessness Services Association of BC and funded by the Province, summarized the findings from 27 Point in Time counts from across the province, including the Victoria Census Metropolitan area<sup>6</sup>. Of those surveyed:

- 68% reported living with an addiction issue;
- 33% reported living with an acquired brain injury (meaning a brain injury that occurred after birth);
- 54% reported living with a mental health issue;
- 27% reported a learning disability or cognitive impairment;
- 47% reported living with an illness or medical condition; and
- 41% reported a physical disability.

The Province is responsible for the provision of health care, including care for mental health conditions and substances use issues. The Province has acknowledged this clearly, through the establishment of the Ministry of Health, which is responsible for the Provincial Health Services Authority. The PHSA operates the BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services program and oversees the Island Health Authority, which itself offers mental health and substance use services including treatment, recovery and rehabilitation services.

The regional health authorities also provide complex care housing, which is housing for adults with "significant mental health, addictions, or concurrent issues, as well as functional needs related to acquired brain injury, chronic illness, or physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities" who are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See Maple Ridge (City) v Scott, <u>2019 BCSC 157</u> at paragraph 22, "... it is the province that is responsible for providing housing and social support, although the cooperation of [the municipality] is essential.;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Available at: https://www.bchousing.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2023-BC-Homeless-Counts.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Note that the "Victoria Census Metropolitan Area covers a geographic footprint larger than the entire CRD. See page 30 for further information.

"at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness" and whose "current needs are not met by existing housing options."

#### Housing

In the 2023 Greater Victoria Point in Time ("PiT") count, 56.1 per cent of respondents indicated that high rents were a barrier to housing; 48.9 per cent identified a lack of available housing options as a barrier and 16.3 per cent identified "poor housing conditions."

In addition to the complex care housing provided under the oversight of the Ministry of Health, the Province is responsible for the provision of social-benefit housing in B.C., including subsidized housing, supportive housing and transitional housing. This has been acknowledged through the establishment of the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

The Ministry of Housing directs BC Housing, which operates or funds several programs to support people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, including: the Emergency Shelter program, the Extreme Weather Response program, Encampment & Homelessness Response (HEART & HEARTH), the Homeless Outreach program and the Homelessness Prevention program.

The Province has also committed to provide \$291 million in funding for "Rapid Response to Homelessness" in the form of ~2,000 modular supportive housing units, with placement priority to unsheltered individuals, or individuals sheltering in emergency shelters.<sup>8</sup>

#### Income Assistance

Nearly 25 per cent of those surveyed in the 2023 Greater Victoria Point in Time count reported that they did not have enough income to pay for housing. High rents and insufficient income were reported as the top two barriers to housing, identified by 56.1 per cent and 52.9 per cent of respondents, respectively.

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction provides "homeless people with assistance and support services", largely in the form of financial support (previously described as "welfare") delivered through the BC Employment and Assistance program. The BCEA program prescribes specific, expedited protocols for homeless applicants. Presently, income assistance for a single person, under the age of 65 and with no minor dependents, who is presently or recently homeless and lives with a health condition that impedes their ability to obtain employment<sup>10</sup>, is set at \$610 per month, with an additional "shelter allowance" of up to \$500 per month towards rent.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/complex-care-housing

<sup>8</sup> https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/Building-BC/RRH

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See page 30 for discussion regarding the limitations of the Greater Victoria Point in Time count.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See "Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers" criteria at:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/eppe/persons-with-persistent-multiple-barriers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See rate table at: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables/income-assistance-rate-table {00171195:2}

#### Homelessness

The Province has acknowledged its responsibilities with respect to homelessness in a plan entitled "Belonging in BC: a collaborative plan to prevent and reduce homelessness", introduced by the Minister of Housing on April 3, 2023 and attached to this report as Appendix 5. In this plan, the Province committed to an ambitious, inter-ministerial response to homelessness, involving the ministries of Health, Housing and Municipal Affairs (which were separate ministries at the time), Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Children and Family Development, Mental Health and Addictions (which has since been rolled into Health), as well as Public Safety and Solicitor General.

The Belonging in BC plan sets three goals: "prevention", "immediate response" and "stability and integration".

The Belonging in BC plan budgeted \$633 million over three years (2022 – 2025) and includes, among other things:

- \$4 million for "encampment supports, including site management, engagement and support for food, sanitation, storage, and the safety of people in the encampments and as they move to indoor spaces", funding the plan described as "in progress, ongoing";
- \$170 million in "Homelessness Supports" to "increase health supports, housing access, social inclusion and system navigation in the Homelessness Plan that build and expand over time; including a new program wrap-around support rent supplement program to help 3,000 people access market housing by 2024/25 and the Integrated Support Framework", to be delivered through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Housing in "early 2023"; and
- \$218 million in funding, through the Homeless Encampment Action Response for Temporary Housing (HEARTH), for emergency housing, shelter options and immediate coordinated supports to assist people in encampments or sheltering in public spaces", which the plan anticipated would be delivered in 2023; and
- \$1.7 billion to "increase health supports, housing access, social inclusion and system navigation in the homelessness plan that build and expand over time". The timeline for this investment states "more info to come".12

The Belonging in BC plan's goals are intended to address the following objectives:

#### Prevention:

- Reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time, particularly from communities that are overrepresented in the homeless population
- Increasing the number of affordable and supportive housing units
- Reducing the number of people discharged from health and correctional facilities to homelessness
- Reducing the number of new income assistance clients with no fixed address

{00171195:2}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Belonging in BC, Appendix A

#### Immediate Response:

- Reducing the number and size of large, complex encampments
- Reducing police/justice interactions with people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Reducing harm/death for those experiencing homelessness and in encampments
- Increasing Indigenous housing and supports options
- Increasing system capacity and readiness for warm weather encampment response
- Increasing the number of complex care housing spaces for adults with complex mental health and substance use needs

#### Stability and Community Integration:

- Reducing chronic homelessness
- Increasing connections to income supports and community-based navigators
- Increasing health supports to those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Reducing drug toxicity deaths related to unstable housing and homelessness
- Reporting back to Persons with Lived Experience on performance measures and impacts, and course correcting based on iterative feedback

The Belonging in BC plan also includes a commitment by the Province to "track the actions and impacts of multiple ministries against the Plan's three goals" in order to "help establish baseline data and ensure ongoing accountability", as follows:

- Measuring outputs: e.g., the number of people supported, housed
- Measuring distinct impacts: e.g., the reduction of Indigenous homelessness
- · Reporting on social impacts, personal journeys
- Developing a Performance Measurement Framework and reporting on progress annually

Staff have been unable to locate any reporting, measurements, or other indicia relating to the real-world impacts of the Belonging in BC plan.

#### Common phraseology

Higher levels of government have made the clear policy decision to communicate in language rooted in "partnership" rather than responsibility. While this may be effective in deflecting political pressure, it is neither an accurate nor helpful portrayal of the role of the public and private-sector bodies which are involved in responding to homelessness.

When the Province employs the term "partner", it is referring to either First Nations governments or agencies (only to the extent that those entities wish to engage or cooperate with the Province), or entities which are under the direction of, or subject to regulation by, the Province. Most often, these "partners" are:

- BC Housing, a government-controlled public-sector agency responsible for fulfilling the directives of the Minister of Housing;
- A subservient level of government which has no lawful authority to interfere with provincial objectives (municipalities); or
- A private-sector organization which contracts with the Province or its agencies to receive
  money in exchange for the provision of a service. For instance, contracted service
  providers for BC Housing's Homeless Outreach Worker program include the Victoria
  Native Friendship Centre, Threshold Housing Society, Burnside Gorge Community
  Services and Pacifica Housing.

The constitutional reality is that the Province has no "partner" in the responsibility to provide housing, health and financial supports to unsheltered individuals. While it may do so in whatever lawful manner it so chooses, including through contracts and exercise of legislative power, the responsibility to provide supports related to housing, poverty reduction, and health care, rests with the Province alone.

# 2. Federal authority and responsibility

# Health care funding

The federal government has powers over public debt and a general taxing power (it can raise money by any mode or system of taxation). While the provinces are responsible for the direct delivery of most medical services, the federal government finances health care through the *Canada Health Act* and establishes conditions by which the province must comply to continue to receive federal money.

# Housing

Through its general financing powers and other residual powers to address matters of national concern, the federal government has traditionally played a role in providing funding for housing. The federal government delivers its housing policy and funding through the Canada and Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC).

# 3. <u>Municipal authority and responsibility</u>

Unlike federal and provincial governments, municipal government does not have any constitutional status. Municipalities are "creatures of the province"; they exist only because provincial legislatures decided to legislate them into existence. While the federal and provincial governments may exercise "residual powers" to fill perceived gaps in authority in their respective spheres, municipal governments may only exercise the authority which is granted to them by provincial statute, either explicitly or through necessary implication.

Areas of municipal authority are set out in section 8 of the *Community Charter*. These include the broad authority to "provide any service that the council considers necessary or desirable", as well as the power to adopt bylaws in relation to specifically enumerated spheres of authority, including the following spheres that are most relevant to regulation of parks:

- Municipal services;
- Public places;

- Trees;
- The health safety or protection of persons or property in some limited circumstances; and
- The protection and wellbeing of the community, in relation to nuisances, disturbances and other "objectionable situations".

### Municipal role in respect to homelessness

Section 2(2)(b) of the *Community Charter* states that the provincial government must not assign responsibilities to municipalities without making provision for the resources required to fulfill the responsibilities. With respect to the factors most related to homelessness – namely, health care, social housing and poverty reduction – the Province has not assigned responsibility, nor the resources required to fulfill such responsibilities, to municipalities.

It is well established that municipal governments do not have the authority, resources or expertise to address the major factors which lead to homelessness and chronic homelessness. As discussed above, responsibility with respect to these matters rests with the Province.

However, the courts have found that local governments have an obligation to cooperate with provincial initiatives in these areas, insofar as they are impacted by municipal decision making. Such cooperation most often relates to land use decisions (e.g., temporary use permits, rezoning approvals, building permits, etc.).

Courts have found that municipalities do <u>not</u> have any obligation or responsibility to provide services or amenities in relation to the s. 7 *Charter* right for an unsheltered individual to erect temporary overnight shelter when none is otherwise accessible. The current state of the law on this issue is discussed further below in the section entitled "Status of the law with respect to temporary overnight sheltering".

#### City support for Provincial initiatives

The City has a long history of investing its support and resources for provincial initiatives to address homelessness.

In 2017, the City joined BC Housing and community partners in a pilot project focused on assisting individuals in encampments with securing indoor housing. Through this initiative, the City participated in the Housing Action Response Team ("HART") – an integrated outreach team offering supports and information to people sheltering outdoors.

The HART team included, at various times, the City's Bylaw staff, Victoria Police Department, Pacifica Downtown Outreach Service, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, BC Housing, Beacon Community Services, Island Health and other community partners.

The HART program continues to this day and formed the basis of the "HEART" portion of the current provincial HEART & HEARTH initiative. The City joined the HEART & HEARTH initiative pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 2024, which is attached as Appendix 6.

The HEART & HEARTH initiative in Victoria involves:

- Provincial funding for 30 tiny home units at 940 Caledonia Street on approximately 18,000 square feet of <u>City-owned land</u>.
- Provincial funding for 73 transitional shelter beds at 1240 Yates Street, which is owned by the City, of which 19 new beds are funded by HEARTH & HEARTH and 54 existing beds are funded under other BC Housing funding programs.
- The entire <u>City-owned</u> building and land at 1240 Yates Street is now being used for the transitional sheltering project.

# ii. Role of urban parks

Municipal parks and open spaces are a vital part of the urban fabric. They are foundational to healthy communities, offering inclusive amenities and opportunities for recreation, socialization and nature-based experiences that contribute to physical and mental wellbeing. Parks are built infrastructure serving important community purposes. They are not a "left-over" or undeveloped space in an otherwise built-up environment. A considerable amount of planning and resources goes into the design, construction and maintenance of every urban park – it is a deliberate investment into the community's wellbeing, no different than construction and operation of a community centre, swimming pool or a library. This is reflected in the special legal status of parks under the *Community Charter*.

# 1. <u>Municipal responsibility in relation to parks</u>

The purposes of a municipality are set out at section 7 of the *Community Charter* and include "providing for stewardship of the public assets of its community". Among the many public assets a municipality may steward, municipal parks are granted unique status, through both the *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act*. The importance of parks is clear from the provisions pertaining to their use and disposition. For instance:

- Property owners wishing to subdivide municipal land into more than three properties are required to provide either parkland "of an amount and in a location acceptable to the local government", or payment to the municipality in an amount comparable to the value of that parkland: Local Government Act, s. 510
- Money received by a local government, either from the sale or disposition of parkland, or through the provision of parkland upon subdivision (as described above), may only be placed in a reserve fund for the purpose of acquiring parklands: Community Charter, s. 188(2)(b)
- A bylaw reserving or dedicating property as a park requires the approval of 2/3 of council members. A bylaw removing the reservation or dedication of a park requires the assent of the electors: Community Charter, s. 30(2) and (3)
- Municipal parkland may only be disposed of with the approval of the electors, and in exchange
  for other suitable parkland or in exchange for funds which must be placed in a reserve fund for
  the purpose of acquiring parkland: Community Charter, s. 27(2)
- Bylaws adopted, or works undertaken by a council which directly affect a park must be consistent with park purposes: *Community Charter*, s. 30(5)

Taken together, these provisions ensure that parkland cannot be depleted as the result of financial, political or other pressure or incentive. No other category of municipal public asset is subject to restrictions of this nature.

The word "park" is not defined in the *Community Charter* but has been interpreted to align with the broad understanding of the word: that is, public land which is "devoted to public recreation". <sup>13</sup>

# 2. The importance of parks in urban and community planning

The benefits of parks and green spaces, particularly in dense urban environments, have been the subject of extensive academic research, a portion of which is summarized below.

# Benefits to public health

Exposure to greenspace is associated with wide-ranging public health benefits, including statistically significant associations with reduced blood pressure, heart rate, cortisol, incidence of type II diabetes and stroke, all-cause and cardiovascular mortality, as well as health-denoting associations with pregnancy outcomes, heart rate variability, and HDL cholesterol, osteoporosis, depression, premature death and self-reported health.<sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> Even short-duration visits to urban parks result in an increase in subjective wellbeing. A park visit of slightly over 20 minutes results in reduced cortisol levels. <sup>16</sup>

Simply spending time in parks, regardless of activity, contributes to lower levels of stress and higher levels of self-reported life satisfaction, happiness and feelings that life is worthwhile. Park exposure has been shown to reduce incidences of psychological distress, depression, anxiety and PTSD, as well as decreased mood disorder medication use and increased attention.<sup>17</sup> Urban greenspace accessibility, maintenance status and perceived security are associated with higher quality of life metrics and lower anxiety and depression levels. <sup>18</sup>

The main predictors of lower-level stress in relation to parks are a higher number of urban greenspaces and easier accessibility, higher tree density and the possibility of performing leisure activities (both physical and intellectual). In particular, higher number and easier accessibility were associated with lower levels of stress in both adolescents and seniors. The latter also benefited from a lower level of depression.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> St. Vital v. Winnipeg, 1945 CanLII 414 (Supreme Court of Canada)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See Appendix 7: Twohig-Bennett C., Jones A. 2018. *The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes*. J. Environ. Res. 166:628-637. doi:10.1016/j.envres.2018.06.030.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See Appendix 8: Wilson, J, Xiao X. 2023. *The Economic Value of Health Benefits Associated with Urban Park Investment*. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2023, 20, 4815. doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20064815

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See Appendix 9: Yuen HK, Jenkins, GR. 2020. *Factors associated with changes in subjective well-being immediately after urban park visit*. Int. J. Environ. Health Res 2020 Apr; 30(2):134 145. doi:10.1080/09603123.2019.1577368.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Wilson, J and Xiao, X, supra

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> See Appendix 10: Gianfredi, V., Buffoli, M., Bebecci, A., Croci, R., Oradini-Alacreu, A. Stirparo, G., Marino, A., Capolongo, S., Signorelli, C. *Association Between Urban Greenspace and Health: A systematic Review of Literature*. Int J Environ Res. Public Health 2021, 18, 5137. doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105137

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Main predictors of enhanced physical activity are the presence of urban greenspaces in a 0.5 to 1 kilometre radius from the subjects' homes; the total number of urban greenspace in the neighbourhood; and their accessibility through public transport. Different types of parks (small and large, developed and undeveloped, with various amenities) are important to ensure that various citizen groups can take advantage of a range of health benefits.<sup>20</sup>

Both mental and physical health outcome improve substantially with the exposure to well-kept urban greenspaces. The main predictors of urban greenspace use are proximity, quality and maintenance. The mere presence of urban greenspace is not enough to secure the desired health outcomes. Important elements that need to be considered and reinvigorated are maintenance, access and perceived security.<sup>21</sup> Well-maintained parks increase the perception of safety, which increases the likelihood that a park will be used.<sup>22</sup>

#### Benefits to environment

From an environmental and climate perspective, parks preserve and restore natural habitats, supporting a wide range of plant and animal species and promoting biodiversity. Natural spaces in parks help mitigate urban heat island effects, improve air quality and contribute to carbon sequestration. Park landscapes also play a significant role in managing stormwater runoff, reducing the risk of flooding, and improving water quality through natural filtration processes.

Restoring ecosystems within parks not only enhances biodiversity but also revitalizes the ecological health of impaired areas. This process creates opportunities for community engagement and experiences that deepen collective understanding and appreciation of these cherished spaces. These benefits underscore the importance of parks in enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities while also contributing to environmental sustainability.<sup>23</sup>

#### Benefits to densification targets

Parks are also vital to responsible densification. A publication from the City Parks Forum of the American Planning Association notes that "Many residents oppose high density because they believe it will consume open spaces, exacerbate parking and traffic issues, or threaten the existing quality of life. A strong policy promoting parks and greenspace can play a crucial role in addressing these concerns. As many now understand, density is less the issue than design and amenities. A recent study in Texas found that people are twice as likely to accept smaller residential properties if there is a park nearby."<sup>24</sup>

# 3. Recent Canadian statistics regarding parks

The 2024 Canadian City Parks Report, which included a survey of over 2,500 urban-dwelling residents, found as follows:

• 67% of residents feel that parks have a role to play in advancing equity and racial justice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See Appendix 11: City Parks Forum, American Planning Association, Briefing Paper 07

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ihid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> See Appendix 12: City Parks Forum, American Planning Association, Briefing Paper 04

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> See Appendix 13: Sadeghian, M., Vardanyan, Z. 2013 *The Benefits of Urban Parks, a Review of Urban Research*. J. Nov. App. Sci. 2013-2-8/231-237 ISSN 2322-5149

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> See Appendix 14: City Parks Forum, American Planning Association, Briefing Paper 10 {00171195:2}

- 95% of residents believe parks play a positive role in their physical health.
- 93% believe parks play a positive role in their mental health.
- 67% of residents visit parks 2-3 times per week or more.
- 56% of residents said they are unsatisfied with the amount of time they currently spend in parks and would like to spend more time in parks.
- 65% of residents consider their city's parks and green spaces to be well cared for. In 2021, this figure was 78%.
- 85% of city residents would like to see more public funding invested in improving city parks and green spaces.
- 86% of residents are interested in becoming more involved in their local park(s).
- 26% of residents feel they have a voice or the ability to influence decision making about their local parks, while 54% do not. The figures last year were 34% and 43%, respectively.
- 40% of respondents said that parks have a role to play in addressing homelessness.

The top three park priorities for residents were native plant gardens and naturalized spaces (75%), year-round washrooms in parks (66%) and benches and seating (54%). Of the 35 cities that participated in the Canadian City Parks Report, Victoria ranked third in the number of park washrooms relative to population. This number does not include portable toilets in parks.

In response to the question "what type of parks do you visit most?", the responses were as follows:

Local or neighbourhood parks (small to medium in size)	77.71%
Trails	40.82%
Naturalized or "wild" parks or green spaces	36.42%
Beaches/waterfronts	33.29%
Destination parks (larger, more programming/amenities)	33.17%
Informal green spaces (school yards, hydro corridors, laneways, etc.)	19.52%
Other (please specify)	7.40%
Plazas or more "grey" public spaces	7.32%

In the same report, a survey of parks staff from 35 Canadian cities found that:

- 92% of cities agree with the following statement: "In recent years, our parks department is facing increased pressure to address issues beyond "traditional" parks issues."
- Only 25% of cities feel "well-equipped" to respond to these pressures

#### iii. Parks in Victoria

# 1. Victoria's parks and open spaces system

Victoria's parks and open spaces are a vital element of the city's character, culture and vibrancy. Serving residents and visitors alike, they offer opportunities for socializing, relaxation, play, learning and connecting with nature. Parks and open spaces are an important contributor to quality of life and support the physical, social, ecological and economic health of the city and its residents.

The Victoria park system is made up of 138 parks and open spaces, totalling 254 hectares spread across 19.47km<sup>2</sup>; or 13 per cent of total City land area. Included in this inventory is 53 hectares of natural areas including endangered remnant Garry oak ecosystems, rocky outcrops and coastal bluffs; and 201 hectares of actively maintained park and green space including playgrounds, sport fields and sport courts, urban forest canopy, community gardens and fitness areas.

Through significant planning and investment, Victoria parks provide an extensive system of amenities serving a diverse, urban population. These amenities include:

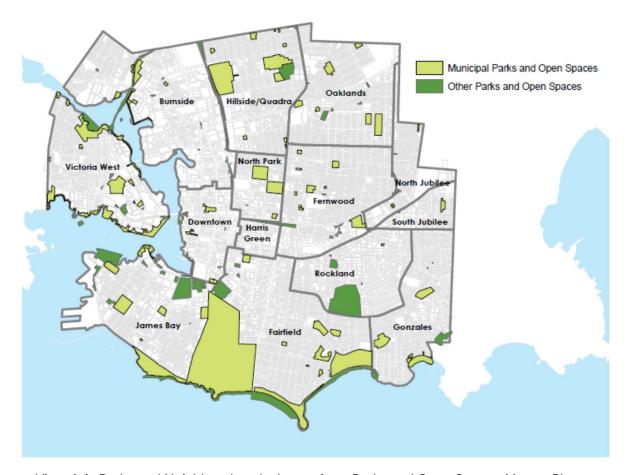
- multi-use sport fields;
- tennis, basketball and pickleball courts;
- skate parks, bike parks and all-wheels facilities;
- areas for public events and performances;
- playgrounds;
- splash pads;
- outdoor fitness equipment;
- picnicking facilities, benches and seating;
- washroom facilities;
- walking and cycling trails;
- natural areas, including areas of critically endangered Garry oak ecosystem;
- community gardens;
- off-leash dog areas;
- horticultural displays; and
- public art.
- 2. Guiding policy

#### Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan

Informed by other City plans and policies, including the 2012 Official Community Plan, the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan was approved in 2017 and is a strategic roadmap to help guide the planning and management of, and investment in, the City's parks system over the next 25 years.

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan sets out a vision, goals and guiding principles and is used as a tool to inform the more detailed planning work that takes place through Local Area Plans, creation of individual park management or improvement plans and specific park design and development projects. It is a strategic-level document that informs and guides park development and improvement.

The plan prioritizes four key areas including: protecting the environment, fostering engaging experiences for everyone, celebrating Victoria and strengthening partnerships.



Victoria's Parks and Neighbourhoods, Image from Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan.

# Urban Forest Master Plan

The Urban Forest Master Plan supports the Official Community Plan (OCP) vision and several of its goals, notably that "Victoria's urban environment, including urban forests, and public and private green spaces support healthy and diverse ecosystems." The comprehensive sustainability emphasis of the OCP is supported through the integration of Placemaking, Land Management and Development, Infrastructure, Environment, Parks and Recreation, and Climate Change and Energy objectives throughout the Urban Forest Master Plan.

The Urban Forest Master Plan provides guidance on the management and enhancement of treed environments throughout the City of Victoria. It is a high-level plan that provides direction to help the municipality invest in and safely maintain its urban forest for the next 20 years and beyond.

#### 3. Park Development

The City is continually investing in parks and working to improve parks, trails and park amenities and to restore sensitive ecosystems to ensure they meet current and future community needs.

Park development and park improvements are major, long-term projects, informed by other City plans and policies and furthers the City's strategic directions and goals. In developing parks or improvement plans, staff review a variety of guiding documents which may include the Official Community Plan, the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan and the Urban Forest Management Plan. The creation of each of these plans represents the results of extensive public engagement to identify key priorities and directions for the City.

Many other planning inputs, in addition to guidance from these documents, inform the creation of a park improvement plan, as illustrated by the figure below:



Park development and improvement require a thorough review of all existing and intended park uses, down to details including hours of anticipated play on sports fields in various seasons to estimate the life expectancy and maintenance costs of various field construction methods.

Park capital improvement projects range in scale from individual playground replacements to small neighbourhood park renewals to large, complex park and recreation projects that occur over multiple years. Public engagement informs the planning and design of these projects by helping identify community needs and interests. The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is attached as Appendix 15. Priority actions identified within the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan are included in the Executive Summary of the plan.

To see an example of the extensive planning park improvements, the Topaz Park Improvement Plan is attached as Appendix 16. This Park Improvement Plan<sup>25</sup> was approved by Council in 2018. In the time since the plan was approved, substantial investments have been made including expanding and updating the artificial turf field and construction of a new all-wheel skate park and pump track; the next phase of construction will begin spring 2025 and will introduce 11 new pickleball courts, a new outdoor fitness area, a central gathering space, a misting station and connecting pathways.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> See Appendix 16 {00171195:2}

# iv. Status of the law with respect to temporary overnight sheltering

1. Recognition that under some circumstances municipalities cannot prohibit all overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness

The law with respect to temporary overnight sheltering in parks was established through two related decisions: *Victoria (City) v. Adams* 2008 BCSC 1363 ("*Adams BCSC*"), which was heard by the BC Supreme Court, and *Victoria (City) v. Adams* 2009 BCCA 563 ("*Adams BCCA*"), which was heard by the BC Court of Appeal.

In both *Adams* decisions, the Courts identified the circumstances that create a limited right for unsheltered individuals to erecting a temporary shelter overnight in public spaces "free from municipal interference". This right flowed from s. 7 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees the right to "life, liberty and security of the person". The Courts found that prohibiting an unsheltered person from putting up some form of overhead shelter in all public areas, when there is no indoor shelter available, interferes with that person's right to security of the person.

The Courts also acknowledged that municipalities are responsible for protecting public places for the benefit of the entire community. In *Adams BCCA*, the Court stated that:

The claims of the homeless people recognized by the trial judge have a narrow compass in absolute terms – they are the right to cover themselves with the most rudimentary form of shelter while sleeping overnight in a public place, when there are not enough shelter spaces available to accommodate all of the City's homeless. The City, on the other hand, bears the responsibility to the public to preserve public places for the use of all, and of necessity focuses on the wide public impact of any use of public places for living accommodation.<sup>26</sup>

The two *Adams* decisions found that, so long as there is insufficient indoor shelter space in a municipality, a complete ban on the erection of temporary overnight shelters in all public spaces causes an unjustifiable breach of s. 7 of the *Charter*.

It is important to note that the s. 7 right recognized in the *Adams* decisions is not a right to shelter during the day, or a general right to shelter. The courts have been asked to recognize such rights over the years but has declined to do so. Neither *Adams BCCA* nor subsequent decisions have recognized:

- a right to shelter<sup>27</sup>,
- an obligation on the part of a municipality to provide shelter, or
- an obligation to provide any ancillary amenities or supports such as washrooms, property storage facilities, hygiene facilities, medical or mental health care, or food.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Adams BCCA at para. 4

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See Johnston v. Victoria (City), 2011 BCCA 400 at paras. 9-12

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See Shantz at para. 123 and Adams BCCA at para. 95

The Court in *Adams BCCA* specifically clarified that the *Adams* decisions did not "impose positive obligations on the City to provide adequate alternative shelter, or to take any positive steps to address the issue of homelessness."<sup>29</sup>

Courts have consistently followed *Adams BCCA* in decisions adjudicating the *Charter* rights of unsheltered individuals, and have provided further direction relating to outdoor sheltering and related municipal responsibilities and authority, including as follows:

- There are no positive obligations on local government to provide shelter or resolve homelessness;<sup>30</sup>
- There is no recognized Charter-protected right to shelter during daytime hours in a park;<sup>31</sup>
- The right not to be deprived of temporary overnight shelter does not include a right to erect shelter in any public location of choice;<sup>32</sup>
- Decisions regarding the parks and the locations within parks in which temporary overnight sheltering will be permitted is a legislative choice made by municipal government, and not one the courts may properly direct;<sup>33</sup> and
- The government action triggering the right to life, liberty and security of the person relates to temporary overnight shelter only, and specifically not to the other deprivations associated with the state of being unhoused or unsheltered.<sup>34</sup>

# 2. Availability of accessible shelter space

In the 2015 decision of *Abbotsford (City) v. Shantz*, the Court determined the availability of shelter spaces by assessing not only the number of available shelter spaces, but also whether those spaces were practically accessible to the affected unsheltered individuals including, as the circumstances may require, that such shelter be "low-barrier".<sup>35</sup> "Accessible" shelter means shelter that a person can access "as they are" in relation to gender, age and sobriety.

Individuals who have access to accessible indoor shelter are not "homeless" within the meaning of the law. This principle was set out in *Adams BCCA* (in which the injunction to clear the park was conditional upon housing being made available to individuals camping there):<sup>36</sup>

Sections 14(1)(d) and 16(1) of the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059 are inoperative insofar <u>and only insofar</u> as they apply to prevent homeless people from erecting temporary overnight shelter in parks <u>when the number of homeless people exceeds the number of available shelter beds in the City of Victoria.</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Adams BCCA at para. 95

<sup>30</sup> Adams BCCA at para. 95

<sup>31</sup> Vandenberg at paras. 123 - 125

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Vancouver Fraser Port Authority v. Brett, 2020 BCSC 876 ("Brett") at para. 109

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Shantz at para. 277

<sup>34</sup> Adams BCCA at para. 88

<sup>35</sup> Shantz at paras. 51, 60, 74, and 222 - 223

<sup>36</sup> Adams BCCA at para. 166

In *Adams BCCA*, the bylaw was found to be overly broad because the purpose of the bylaw was the preservation of parks, yet the ban on temporary overnight shelter applied to <u>all</u> public places.

As presently adopted, the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* is entirely different from the City's pre-*Adams* Parks Bylaw as it does not contain a blanket prohibition, but rather, prohibits overnight sheltering in only 24 out of the City's 138 parks. In other words, the *Charter* right identified in *Adams* can be lawfully exercised in the majority of City parks.

Since the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Bedford v. Canada (Attorney General)*<sup>37</sup>, courts adjudicating similar claims as those in the *Adams* decisions have focused the analysis on "gross disproportionality" of bylaws:<sup>38</sup>

[204] Gross disproportionality describes state actions or legislative responses to a problem that are so extreme as to be disproportionate to any legitimate government interest. This principle is infringed if the impact of the restriction on the individual's life, liberty or security of the person is grossly disproportionate to the object of the measure. As with overbreadth, the focus is not on the impact of the measure on society or the public, which are matters for s. 1, but on its impact on the rights of the claimant.

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[224] I conclude that the effect of denying the City's homeless access to public spaces without permits and not permitting them to erect temporary shelters without permits is grossly disproportionate to any benefit that the City might derive from furthering its objectives and breaches the s. 7 *Charter* rights of the City's homeless.

By expressly prohibiting temporary overnight sheltering in only 24 of the City's 138 parks, the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* as presently adopted does not, in the view of staff, raise issues of gross disproportionality when compared to the benefits the City derives by furthering the objective of preservation and stewardship of parks. As noted below, an abundance of lawful overnight sheltering sites are presently available in Victoria for individuals who have no choice but to shelter outdoors.

# 3. Legislative authority to select parks for overnight sheltering

As well as balancing community access to parks, Council must also balance the allocation of resources dedicated to park maintenance. Overnight sheltering in parks has been shown to place a significant financial burden on municipalities. <sup>39</sup> The management of these costs, including the number

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> 2013 SCC 72

<sup>38</sup> Shantz at paras. 192, 204 and 224

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> See for instance *Shantz* at para. 220: The sustainable use of publicly owned property requires that there be some constraints on the way in which it is used. The evidence establishes that activities of people camping in City parks can and has caused damage to that property, with the consequences being shifted onto the City and ultimately taxpayers.

and location of parks where temporary overnight sheltering is not prohibited, is an appropriate consideration for Council in its management of City finances and responsibility to the City's taxpayers.

In acknowledging that municipalities are empowered to designate specific parks for temporary overnight sheltering, the court in *Vancouver Fraser Port Authority v Brett*, 2020 BCSC 876 found that "... the use of public parks by the homeless [does] not afford the homeless a licence to choose wherever they wish to set up an encampment, nor permit encampments which are unsafe".<sup>40</sup>

The Court in *Adams BCCA* identified that "The City ... bears the responsibility to the public to preserve public places for the use of all, and of necessity focuses on the wide public impact of any use of public places for living accommodation". <sup>41</sup> In *Shantz*, the court explicitly confirmed that it is within the legislative authority of municipalities to determine which park areas are made available for overnight sheltering. <sup>42</sup>

Parkland preservation remains an important municipal purpose and benefit to the public interest, as recently identified by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice<sup>43</sup>:

In all this we must not lose sight of the countervailing interest of preserving public parks. It was an important enough public interest that in the Toronto encampment injunction case Schabas J. found that it decided the balance of convenience in favour of the city notwithstanding the risk of irreparable harm: *Black v. Toronto (City)*, 2020 ONSC 6398.

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[85] Encampments are a symptom, not a solution. The City is trying to find a solution to homelessness in consultation with numerous others. It has attempted to address the problem with the old protocol, the encampment process and the new protocol. It has limited resources and a duty to its housed constituency. I think I am well advised to leave them to it without interference. Micro-management by judges will not be productive.

Subject to the *Charter* constraints established in *Adams* and subsequent decisions, the selection of where to prohibit temporary overnight sheltering is a legislative decision of the City.<sup>44</sup> Proximity to existing, third-party services (i.e., overdose prevention sites, meal-provision services) has been a relevant consideration of the courts with respect to the location of temporary overnight sheltering and encampments,<sup>45</sup> but this consideration is not determinative. It also does not impose a positive obligation upon a municipality to create or maintain services.<sup>46</sup> Victoria is of such a small geographic size compared to other municipalities in which "proximity to services" has been considered that there is some question of whether it would be a consideration at all.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Brett at para. 109

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Adams BCCA at para. 4

<sup>42</sup> Shantz at para. 278

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Heegsma at paras. 77, 85

<sup>44</sup> Shantz at para. 277

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Prince George (City) v. Stewart, 2021 BCSC 2089 at paras. 93 - 95

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Adams BCCA at paras. 95 – 96; Shantz at para. 148

# 4. No positive obligation upon municipalities to provide supports

The *Charter* does not create an obligation on the part of municipalities to provide public washroom facilities or any other amenity in a particular location, or at all. In *Maple Ridge (City) v Scott*, 2019 BCSC 1150, the Court concluded that there is no jurisdiction for the courts to determine which amenities or services a municipality must allow on city property:<sup>47</sup>

[49] Whatever one might think of Maple Ridge's priorities and approach, or of the social utility of the purposes for which access is sought, it is not for me in the context of this proceeding to tell the City who else it must allow onto its property. I have no jurisdiction to do so, and the defendants concede as much. As Chief Justice Hinkson observed in *Abbotsford v Shantz*, 2015 BCSC 1909 at para 123,

It is not for this Court to wade into the political arena to assess the City's reaction to the need for housing, including what was described by DWS as a "Dignity Village" or services, such as a Sobering Centre, or needle exchange for its homeless.

Despite the absence of any positive obligation at law to do so, the City provides 23 washrooms for public use in various locations throughout the city.

#### 5. International law

The law pertaining to section 7 rights to erect temporary overnight shelter have been informed by international law since its inception in *Adams BCSC* and is has been revisited by the court in subsequent proceedings. Put shortly, international law does not form part of Canadian law. International law can only be used as an "interpretive aid" to the *Charter*.<sup>48</sup>

# v. Assessing quantitative need for temporary overnight shelter in parks

Data with respect to homelessness in Victoria is drawn primarily from two sources: the Greater Victoria Point in Time Counts ("PiTs") and data generated internally, informed primarily by reporting from public-facing staff (primarily in the Bylaw, Parks and Engineering & Public Works departments).

#### 1. Point in Time Counts ("PiT counts")

PiT counts are led by the Capital Regional District and coordinated by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria. They are an important indicator for assessing need across the region but must be referenced with caution for two primary reasons. Firstly, the PiT counts are conducted across a geographic area far larger than the City of Victoria. Secondly, the definitions of homelessness adopted by the PiT counts differs from how that term is used in the court decisions reviewed above and, therefore, cannot be used to establish the margin by which the number of unsheltered individuals exceeds the number of accessible indoor shelter spaces.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Scott at para. 49

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Shantz at para 173

# Geographic area

The PiT counts are conducted every three years, on two consecutive days in March, across the entire "Victoria Census Metropolitan Area", which is defined as the 13 Vancouver Island CRD municipalities and First Nations Reserves located within the geographic borders of those municipalities, and part of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.

The Victoria Census Metropolitan Area spans a geographic area of approximately 700 km². Within that, the City of Victoria covers 19.45 km²; less than three per cent of the geographic area of the broader VCMA. Victoria is home to approximately 23 per cent of the VCMA's total population, which is slightly less than 400,000 people.

While the PiT count is an important indicator of the homeless population south of the Malahat, it is important to note that the PiT data does not distinguish the number of unsheltered individuals in each municipality. As such, this data does not provide an accurate snapshot of homelessness in the City of Victoria.

#### Categories of homelessness

The PiT counts identify five categories of homelessness:

- 1. Unsheltered people who are sleeping in "a public space, park, tent, vehicle or other place not intended for human habitation"
- 2. Emergency sheltered people who are sleeping in emergency shelters, seasonal shelters, youth shelters or shelters providing emergency accommodation to victims of domestic violence
- 3. Couch surfing people who are sleeping at the home of a family member, friend, stranger or hotel/motel
- 4. Housed in public systems/facilities people who are sleeping in public system settings, and do not have a stable home to return to, such as correctional "halfway houses", hospitals and treatment centres
- 5. Transitionally housed people living in transitional housing, which is a longer term (but still temporary) accommodation intended to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing.

As discussed further below, the limited section 7 right to erect temporary overnight shelter is only engaged when a person cannot access <u>any</u> shelter. In other words, this right would generally be engaged with respect to individuals identified in the PiT counts as "unsheltered". As a result, some caution is required when balancing the PiT count numbers with the number of available outdoor shelter sites in the city.

The following table reflects the most recent PiT counts. Only individuals falling within the first category may have a s. 7 *Charter* right to shelter overnight in designated City parks:<sup>49</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Note that this does not include individuals whose housing status was "unknown". {00171195:2}

	Unsheltered	Emergency sheltered	Couch surfing or hotel/motel	Transitional housing or Institution
2018	235	359	95	836
2020	270	350	145	743
2023	242	282	85	1011

#### 2. Structure Counts by the City

In late 2022, following a steady increase in outdoor sheltering in Victoria, Bylaw Services initiated weekly counts of structures in parks and public places. Data from these counts should be used as a rough guideline only, as it may be affected by factors including the vantage point of the officers performing the count, poor visibility as the result of rain or fog and the time of day at which the count was conducted.

Additionally, data from the counts is not a precise indicator of the number of <u>people</u> sheltering in the park; some structures are shared, some are single occupancy and some are used for storage or food preparation rather than overnight sheltering.

Over the course of 2023, the average number of structures observed in parks was 35 and the average number in other public spaces (e.g., sidewalks, boulevards, etc.) was 88, for a total annual average of 123 structures in Victoria's public places. Between March 5 and 12, staff observed an average total of 116 structures in parks and public spaces.

In 2024, the average number of structures observed in parks was 25 and the average number in other public spaces was 110, for a total annual average of 135 structures in Victoria's public places.

# vi. Assessing Current Capacity

#### 1. <u>Indoor Shelters</u>

Due to several factors, including the absence of any centralized communications system accessible to the public or municipalities, an accurate inventory of available temporary indoor shelter spaces is notoriously difficult to establish.

Staff have obtained the following information directly from the operators of local shelters. It is included to provide a general idea of the present status of emergency and transitional housing in the city and should be regarded as approximate.

Operators noted in particular that availability of emergency shelter beds on any given night is extremely difficult to estimate for various reasons, including that some shelters allow guests to use their allocated bed for up to 30 consecutive nights.

Additionally, all available spaces will not be accessible to all unsheltered individuals, as some shelter and housing facilities impose conditions to entry based on factors such as age, gender, substance abstinence, etc.

With those caveats, staff have ascertained that:

- As of February 28, 2025, there were 404 emergency shelter beds in the city.
- In addition, there are over 1,440 units of transitional and/or supportive housing within Victoria.

  50 These housing options are not "walk-in" and are available through BC Housing and/or community outreach workers or through application to individual housing providers.

A breakdown of the number and location of beds is available as Appendix 17.

# 2. <u>Lawful outdoor temporary shelter space</u>

Ascertaining the park systems capacity to accommodate sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness is extremely difficult for a number of reasons. First, urban parks were not designed to provide temporary overnight shelter and, in many instances, are not suitable for overnight sheltering due to their topography, vegetation or layout. Secondly, there are a number of regulations under the existing *Parks Regulation Bylaw* limiting where temporary overnight shelters can be erected, including things like distance from playing fields, environmentally sensitive areas, playgrounds, etc. Finally, by their very nature, most overnight sheltering activity is beyond the City's control. Because the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* imposes separation between shelters, an inefficient placement of one shelter may greatly limit the number of other overnight shelters that can be lawfully erected in a park. Therefore, any estimation of sheltering capacity in a park is inevitably only an approximation.

# Methodology Used

Parks staff utilized the City's geographic information system (VicMap) to analyse all parks considered potentially suitable for sheltering. The restrictions under the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* were then superimposed onto each park to exclude areas where temporary overnight sheltering is prohibited under the bylaw. In addition, practical barriers to sheltering, such as sloped terrain, densely treed areas, ecological restoration sites and adjacency to infrastructure which would make a site unsuitable or undesirable for sheltering were also excluded. That left the areas which are potentially available for temporary overnight sheltering. Applying the maximum sheltering site size from the bylaw (nine square metres for each shelter), staff were then able to generate the potential sheltering capacity for each park.

Beacon Hill Park has been excluded from this exercise because under the terms of the trust pursuant to which the City owns that park, overnight sheltering is not permitted – a conclusion recently confirmed by the BC Court of Appeal.<sup>51</sup>

#### Sheltering capacity

A total of 55 parks have been identified where temporary overnight sheltering is functionally feasible and a detailed summary of each of those parks is included in Appendix 18.

The total potential capacity for temporary overnight shelters in the park system is estimated at 1,259 shelter sites. This number is a conservative estimate and based on methodology summarized above

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Although transitional and supportive housing are technically defined differently, each service provider does operate slightly differently so a general guideline of 'housing with supports' has driven this data.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> British Columbia v. Friends of Beacon Hill Park, 2023 BCCA 177

and explain in more detail in Appendix 18. The actual sheltering capacity realized at each location may vary depending on how shelters are set up relative to another shelter and immediate environmental conditions. The existing bylaw prohibits all sheltering in 24 parks, which further reduces the number of lawful overnight sheltering capacity in the park system to approximately 773 shelters.

# vii. Conclusions on Need & Capacity

As of March 2023, the PiT count indicated that there are 524 people who are either unsheltered or emergency sheltered in the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area. In the two weeks on either side of the PiT count, Bylaw Officers observed an average of 116 structures in City parks and public spaces. Even assuming double occupancy in every structure observed (for a hypothetical total of 232 people), and allowing for a wide margin of error with respect to both the PiT counts and City data, the discrepancy between the two strongly suggests that unsheltered people in the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area are not entirely concentrated within the geographic boundaries of Victoria.

Excluding parks where sheltering is prohibited at all times, there is capacity to accommodate 763 lawful overnight shelters in City parks.

Even if the City were to accept the extremely unlikely proposition that all 524 people who are unsheltered or emergency sheltered are all within the geographic boundaries of Victoria, and that none of them is able to access emergency indoor shelter, the number of potential shelter spaces in the park system exceeds the need. Therefore, the City can continue to limit the number of parks where temporary overnight sheltering is permitted.

# viii. Role of City Regulations

Victoria's experience since the *Adams* decision has been that prolonged overnight sheltering in public parks is not compatible with urban park purposes. The court decisions are clear that an absolute prohibition on overnight sheltering is not constitutionally valid while there is inadequate indoor shelter space available. However, they are equally clear that municipalities retain the authority to manage and regulate their parks.

Council has also heard from the public, including the advocates for the unsheltered community – most recently at the evening meeting of Council on February 13 – that packing up possessions every morning is challenging for some individuals sheltering outdoors, and that full-time encampments are preferable for some individuals. However, this is contrary to City and provincial policy and is not supported by the case law.

Speaking at an event in 2025, Premier Eby summarized the provincial rationale, stating that "Encampments are not safe. They are not a safe place to live. People die in fires. In the encampments along Hastings [in Vancouver], 100 per cent of the women surveyed in that encampment reported being assaulted." Similarly, the City's experience with full-time encampments in Victoria is that they are unsafe, particularly for more vulnerable encampment residents.

Ultimately, it is the role of the City to steward public assets, such as parks, and to promote community wellbeing by ensuring that parks are available to the entire community for the purposes that they were constructed: sports, recreation and enjoyment. This must be balanced with the needs of the unsheltered members of the community who, due to the lack of adequate health and social supports

and housing, are forced to shelter in public parks. While sheltering in parks is not an answer to homelessness, it is an unfortunate reality that some sheltering in parks is unavoidable until adequate resources and land are provided by other levels of government to address the causes of chronic homelessness.

Council, through the *Parks Regulation Bylaw*, must balance these competing demands on the parks network and create a system of regulations which best maintains this critical public asset while preserving adequate temporary overnight shelter capacity for persons experiencing homelessness when there are no other alternatives available.

#### **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

At the present time, the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* regulates where in a park a shelter may be erected by a homeless person and includes a list of 24 parks where sheltering is prohibited at all times. This leaves 114 parks where overnight sheltering is not prohibited by the *Parks Regulation Bylaw*. However, many of those 114 parks are not suitable for sheltering because they are either too small, are primarily environmentally-sensitive areas or sport fields or, due to their topography, are considered unsuitable for sheltering.

A careful review of all the parks has identified 55 parks, not including Beacon Hill Park, where sheltering is considered potentially feasible. Information about each of those parks, including each park's potential sheltering capacity, is included in Appendix 18. If sheltering is permitted in all these parks (including the parks where it is currently prohibited), approximately 1,259 shelters could be accommodated in the parks system. This greatly exceeds the estimated number of persons forced to shelter outdoor in Victoria, which is estimated to be less than 500.

Exempting a limited number of parks from the general prohibition on erection of temporary overnight shelters by persons experiencing homelessness, as long as the park provides adequate potential sheltering capacity, would allow Council to control where overnight sheltering occurs while respecting the court decisions regarding the rights of unsheltered persons to protect themselves from the elements when no other alternatives are available.

In the course of determining in which parks temporary overnight sheltering should be allowed as an exception to the general prohibition on erection of structures in a park, Council may maintain or modify the current list of parks where sheltering is prohibited at all times, provided that there is sufficient potential sheltering capacity in Victoria to accommodate the anticipated demand by persons experiencing homelessness.

# Option 1: Amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw (recommended)

A number of amendments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* provisions dealing with sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness is recommended to address the issues discussed above. Specifically, it is recommended that Council:

1. Replace the definition of "homeless person" with a new definition of "person experiencing homelessness" that uses a more appropriate terminology and better reflects court decisions regarding who may be entitled to a constitutionally protected right to erect overnight shelter in

- a public park under certain circumstances. The new definition would exclude persons who can utilize accessible shelters or housing but choose to shelter in a park instead;
- 2. Introduce a definition of "temporary overnight shelter" which makes it clear that the exception to the general prohibition on erecting shelters in public parks applies only to temporary shelters erected overnight by persons experiencing homelessness for the purpose of sheltering from the elements to prevent the risk of hypothermia. In other words, it is intended as a last resort when no other options remain;
- 3. Update the language of the existing regulations regarding sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness to provide greater clarity, while preserving the substance of existing regulations;
- 4. Increase the buffer zone between playgrounds and sheltering locations from eight metres to 15 metres to reduce potential conflicts between these very distinct park uses, especially younger children;
- 5. Expressly prohibit sheltering in all parks except a limited number of parks specifically listed in the bylaw. This will make it easier for everyone to understand in which parks temporary overnight shelters are permitted and will clarify that sheltering in parks is an exception rather than a strategy for responding to homelessness. The specific list of the parks is included in the recommended motion but is ultimately for Council to determine based on Council's view of how to best balance the need to ensure there is sufficient space within the city to accommodate temporary overnight sheltering by persons experiencing homelessness, and maintaining parks for their intended purpose for the use and enjoyment of the community as a whole; and
- 6. Prohibit any local government or public authority from directing or encouraging a person experiencing homelessness to shelter in a park or transporting or transferring such persons to Victoria without first securing for them indoor shelter or housing. This provision would discourage the current practice by some public authorities to actively promote or facilitate sheltering in Victoria parks as an answer to homelessness.

These amendments will clarify the language of the applicable regulations and provide for a reasonable balance between the needs of a variety of park users, protection of an important municipal infrastructure and the needs of persons experiencing homelessness as clarified in various court decisions discussed above. Most significantly, they reflect the position that sheltering in parks is not an answer to homelessness and must only be utilized as an absolute last resort when no other alternatives are available.

The parks proposed for inclusion in the bylaw as locations where temporary overnight shelters are permitted are considered to be more than adequate to accommodate the current number of persons experiencing homelessness in Victoria. Therefore, this option is recommended.

# Option 2: Maintain the status quo

The current regulatory scheme is considered legally valid and enforceable, therefore, Council can take no action and leave the existing bylaw unaltered. However, as noted above, the current regulations are complicated and potentially confusing and do not entirely reflect the more recent court decisions

regarding sheltering in public parks by persons experiencing homelessness. Specifically, the current bylaw includes a general prohibition, with an exception for "homeless persons", which then includes various exceptions from that exception. As such, it is both challenging to read, explain and enforce, as well as potentially creating an incorrect impression that parks are intended to serve as a sheltering answer to homelessness crisis. Therefore, this option is not recommended.

### 2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

The recommended option is consistent with a number of Strategic Plan objectives, including:

- "Support a range of civilian, bylaw and policing crisis response and prevention services."
- "Support innovative, well-being solutions to reduce harm for housed and unhoused people living in neighbourhoods where there are shelters."
- "Work with partner agencies and governments to create life opportunities for unhoused people."

# Financial Impacts

As outlined within this report, the financial burden of managing sheltering in public spaces has escalated significantly, costing the City over \$10.8 million since 2023 across multiple departments, including Bylaw Services, Parks and Public Works. While the City has taken proactive measures to support individuals experiencing homelessness, these costs continue to grow, straining resources needed for core municipal services.

Despite not having the mandate or resources to address homelessness at its root cause, the City has continued to invest in supportive initiatives, with nearly \$12.5 million in recent years on various investments to support the unsheltered community in Victoria.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Updating the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* is consistent with the following objectives outlined in the City's Official Community Plan:

- 9(a) That a network of parks and open spaces meets citywide and local area needs including at least one park or open space within walking distance (400 metres) of 99 per cent of households
- 9(c) That parks, open spaces and facilities contribute to the enhancement and restoration of ecological functions
- 9(d) That a diversity of inclusive facilities, services and programming enables broad community access and participation in an active lifestyle
- 9(e) That parks and recreational facilities are designed to achieve multiple benefits and accommodate a diversity of people and activities

#### CONCLUSIONS

Managing sheltering in public spaces, including parks, that were never intended or designed for this use is challenging, costly and interferes with the proper functioning of those spaces. The end goal is to ensure that no Victoria resident is forced to shelter outdoors and parks remain available to all

{00171195:2}

residents to enjoy for their intended and designed purposes. Staff have provided the comprehensive information in this report to enable Council to make an informed decision as to the path forward towards balancing the needs of the community, while accommodating sheltering activity in limited circumstances as directed by court decisions.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Sheffield Derrick Newman

Manager, Operations, Bylaw Services Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities

Tom Zworski City Solicitor

# Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

#### **List of Attachments**

Appendix 1 - List of Amendments to Parks Regulation Bylaw

Appendix 2 - Parks Sheltering Damage Report

Appendix 3 - Proposal from Pacifica Housing

Appendix 4 - Extension Proposal from Pacifica Housing

Appendix 5 - Belonging in BC

Appendix 6 - MOU HEART & HEARTH

Appendix 7 - Twohig-Bennett Article

Appendix 8 - Wilson Article

Appendix 9 - Yuen Article

Appendix 10 - Gianfredi Article

Appendix 11 - APA Parks Improve Public Health Paper

Appendix 12 - APA Parks Create Safer Neighborhoods Paper

Appendix 13 - Sadeghian Article

Appendix 14 - APA Parks for Smart Growth Paper

Appendix 15 - Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan

Appendix 16 - Topaz Park Improvement Plan

Appendix 17 - Emergency and Transitional Housing Capacity in Victoria

Appendix 18 - Park Overviews

Appendix 19 – Washroom Map

Bylaw Number		Abstract	Date Passed	Amendment Number	Parent Bylaw	Consequential bylaws	Bylaw Repealed	Date Repealed	Repealing Bylaw
10-074	Parks Regulation Bylaw - Ticketing Consequential Amendment Bylaw		25-Nov-10	0		_			
20-113	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw	The purpose of this Bylaw is to amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to temporarily prohibit any sheltering in Centennial Square.	10-Dec-20	11	07-059			-	
20-124	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw	The purpose of this Bylaw is to amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to provide for a buffer between private or residential property and any homeless shelter erected in a park.	10-Dec-20	12	07-059				
18-058	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (Mobile Bicycle Vending Miscellaneous Amendments Bylaw No. 18-058, 2018)	Re-instate the provisions to regulate mobile bibcycle vending that had been introduced in July 2017 and repealed December 31, 2017 by Bylaw No 17-073	26-Apr-18		07-059				
19-040	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (Mobile Bicycle Vending Miscellaneous Amendments Bylaw No. 19-040, 2019)	Purpose is to establish provisions to regulate mobile bicycle vending on City property.	11-Apr-19		09-79, 07- 059				
17-073	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (Mobile Bicycle Vending Miscellaneous Amendments Bylaw, 2017)	To amend the Streets and Traffic Bylaw, Parks Regulation Bylaw and Street Vendor's Bylaw to Regulate Mobile Bicycle Vendors and the use of public space	06-Jul-17	0	09-79				
09-014	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 1)	Overnight shelter	05-Feb-09	1	07-059				
20-102	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 10)	The purpose of this Bylaw is to amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to temporarily allow for daytime sheltering in City parks by persons experiencing homelessness and to better regulate such sheltering activity	14-Sep-20	10	07-059				
	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 13)	to amend the <i>Parks Regulation Bylaw</i> to temporarily prohibit any sheltering in Central Park.	18-Feb-21	13					
21-049	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 15)	to amend the <i>Parks Regulation Bylaw</i> to better regulate sheltering in public parks by persons experiencing homelessness, to permanently prohibit sheltering in Centennial Square and Cecelia Ravine parks and to extend temporary prohibition on sheltering in Central Park until September 18, 2022, which is the date on which temporary use permit for emergency housing at 940 Caledonia expires.	15-Apr-21	15					
21-068	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 16)	to amend the <i>Parks Regulation Bylaw</i> to temporarily prohibit all sheltering activity in Beacon Hill Park to allow the park to recover from intensive sheltering activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.	8-Jul-21	16					
23-063	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 17)	to amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to add Beacon Hill Park and Central Park to locations where overnight sheltering is prohibited at all times.	6-Jul-23	17	07-059				
23-070	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 18)	to amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to add Hollywood Park, Regatta Point Park, Stadacona Park, and Topaz Park to the list of parks where overnight sheltering is prohibited at all times.	9-Nov-23	18	07-059				
24-038	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 19)	to amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to add Irving Park and Vic West Park to the list of parks where sheltering is prohibited.	4-Jul-24	19	07-059			_	
09-021	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 2)	Overnight shelter and sensitive ecosystems	05-Mar-09	2	07-059				
	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 3)	8:00 pm to 7:00 am from May 1, 2009 to August 31 2009	30-Apr-09	3	07-059				
	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 4)	Enforcement Date September 1, 2009 to October 31, 2009	27-Aug-09		07-059				
	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 5)	Enforcement Date Novmeber 06, 2009 to March 31, 2010	05-Nov-09		07-059				
10-021	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 6)	Definition of homeless person and times camping permitted	29-Apr-10	6	07-059				
16-049	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No.7)	overnight sheltering is no longer permitted in a playground, sports field, footpath, or road within a park, Bastion Square, Haegert Park, Cridge Park, Kings Park, Arbutus Park, environmentally sensitive areas, a park that has been designated for an event	23-Jun-16	7	07-059				
17-099	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No.8)	To amend the Parks Regulation Bylaw to provide better regulations necessary for proper management and operations for the municipal parks in the city of victoria and to provide an effective system of permitting for signs and other structures	26-Oct-17	8	07-059				
18-044	Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No.9)	To Amend the Parks And Regulation Bylaw to Prohibit Overnight Sheltering in Culturally Sensitive Areas, on Coffin Island and in the Following Parks: Reeson Park and Quadra Park	09-Aug-18	9	07-059				

# City of Victoria Parks Division

# Sheltering-Related Damage Report

Updated: December 2024

Picture	Location	Date discovered	Description	Cost to repair
	Irving Park	Oct 2024	New Horizons Pollinator garden vandalized	
	Oaklands Park	Sept 2024	Feces smeared on tennis courts, furniture, nets	
	Multiple parks – BHP, Cecelia Ravine, Dallas bluffs, Banfield, Pemberton, Topaz, etc	Ongoing	Damage to natural area vegetation and habitat	
	Multiple parks  – BHP, Cecelia Ravine, Dallas bluffs, Banfield	Ongoing	Constant refuse being left in parks	
	Irving Park	Sept 2024	Turf restoration	
	VicWest Park	Aug 2024	Turf restoration	

Topaz wire theft	June 2024	Lighting wire cut and removed
Cecelia Ravine Park	May 2024	Natural features damaged, rocks in creek removed and stolen
Johnson St bridge	March 2024	Fencing cut
Topaz wire theft	Feb 2024	Damage to power outlets
Topaz wire theft	Feb 2024	Field storage box stolen wire, damaged door

Royal Athletic Park	Jan 2024	Chain link fencing cut	
Topaz Park	Jan 2024	Field lighting wire theft	
Stadacona	Nov /23	Splice into lamppost	
Park Operations	Sept/23	Fence cut, intruder found in yard by staff – not apprehended	
Topaz ATF	July-Aug/23	33 irrigation sprinklers	
Topaz Glasgow building	July 6/23	Building locks cut off, door damaged, nothing missing	
Topaz ATF	July 1/23	Net storage kiosks broken into, doors damaged to gain access to power	

Topaz ATF	June 29/23	Doors to storage area	
		broken into, will require replacing doors/locks	
Topaz Skatepark	May 29 2023	600V electrical panel, 10' above ground level, found open, someone had cut off the lock, presumably to gain access to power, no other evidence of tampering but a serious safety risk	\$250
Topaz skatepark	May 2023	People sheltering in park cutting locks and connecting personal devices to special events power kiosks; staff in turn disconnected power	
Cecelia Ravine Park	May 2023	Person cut hole in Community garden fence	
Tolmie Green	April 2023	Resident reported fence had been vandalized by people sheltering in area and trespassing	
Franklin Green	April 2023	Individual cut hole in private fence leading to private property, fence protects 16' drop off	
Topaz ATF	April 2023	Multiple incidents of locks being cut off in new field – storage bunker, gates, kiosks	
Topaz skatepark	April 2023	Person lit fire next to washroom, ongoing issue ay multiple washrooms	
Beacon Hill Park	April 2023	Individual started screaming at public and staff, broke tree branch and ripped flowers out of the gardens. Was apprehended by VicPD	

	Park	April 2023	Person cut hole in	
		April 2025		
	Operations		perimeter fence to gain	
	Yard, 100 Cook		access to Yard, nothing	
			reported missing	
	Cecelia Ravine	April 2023	Person cut hole in fence	
	Park		to gain access to private	
			property	
	Kings Road	April 2023	Person set fire to PW	
			porta-potty	
	Oswald Park	April 2023	Person set community	
			garden shed on fire, destroyed	
	Stadacona Park	April 2023,	person dumped paint	
		June 2023	onto tennis court, will	
			require re-surfacing	
7.0				
	D. JAHLEY	NA	BA III I	d5 000
A CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF TH	Royal Athletic	March 9,	Multiple junction boxes	\$5,000
0.0	Park	2023	opened. Wire stripped	
			and stolen.	
	Tanas Bank	N. 4 a mala 7	Canadada anada anad	~¢500
	Topaz Park –	March 7,	Conduit exposed and	~\$500
	Lacrosse Box	2023	smashed to access	
			wires. Live jumper wire	
			hot wired onto leads.	
7.9			Traced and shut off at	
			breaker.	
- Jan 19				1
	Topaz Park –	March 7,	Lock on outdoor	~\$50
	Glasgow	2023	electrical switch cut. No	
	Bathroom west		power as shut off at	
	side outlet		breaker	
	Topaz Park	Feb 2023	Restoration site	\$1,000
			vandalized. Many	
			shrubs pulled out,	
			stakes and caging	
			destroyed, garbage and	
	1	1	, , , , , ,	1

			sheltering garbage left behind	
	Stadacona Park	Jan 20, 2023	Hand plates forced open and wires stolen.	\$1,200
	Topaz Bike Park	Jan 9, 2023	Junction box wire stolen after anti theft bolts installed on hand plates	\$60
	Topaz Bike Park	Dec 31, 2022	11 lights tampered with and extensive wire theft	\$3100
	Napier Lane Bike Park	Nov 29, 2022	Hand plates forced open and wires stolen.	\$250
	Central Park – Score Booth	Nov 1, 2022	Broken wire connection on score booth.	\$250
The second secon	Finlayson Hut	Fall 2022, multiple incidents	Damage to hut structure, benches, by hammer	\$10,000
	Central Park – Junction Box	Oct 15, 2022	Damaged junction box with cut wires in asphalt	\$500

	Summit Park	October, 2022	Sheltering related Brushfire	\$500 for staff time. No restoration completed.
	Topaz park – vandalized sprinklers	Summer 2022	Sprinklers kicked off near tents multiple times	\$1,500
Cope in Section  A Description  Cope in Section  A Description  A	Beacon Hill Park	Jan 19, 2022	Speed reader board stolen from Douglas Frontage	\$500
	Cecelia Ravine Community Garden	May 25, 2021	Camper exposed electrical at junction box and trenched it to campsite	\$1,000
	Topaz Park	October 10, 2021	Individual dismantling lights on washroom at South end. VicPD 21-40755	~\$200

Irving Park	March 10, 2021	Electrical wires exposed at handplate	\$100
Beacon Hill Park	June 17, 2020	Base of lamp standard tampered with. Electrical outlet added to hot wire.	\$200



# CITY OF VICTORIA ENCAMPMENT OUTREACH WITH A HOUSING FOCUS

# **PROPOSAL**

Submission: July 28, 2023

#### SUBMITTED BY:

Carolina Ibarra, CEO
Pacifica Housing Advisory Association
827 Fisgard Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1R9

P: (250) 385 – 2131 extension 2107 E: cibarra@pacificahousing.ca

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1988, Pacifica Housing Advisory Association (Pacifica Housing) has successfully developed and/or operated dozens of projects along the housing continuum, with the key purpose of providing equitable housing and support services for people at multiple entry points in Greater Victoria and Nanaimo. We develop community-based projects that meet people where they are at, helping those who are marginalized exit the cycle of homelessness. Our support services include our Streets to Homes (S2H) program, a Community Services team that supports upwards of 500+ individuals in the private market with rent supplements, non-clinical supports and connections to individualized services, and Indigenous Outreach services that provide culturally appropriate client services and supports to our urban Indigenous community. Through our Victoria Downtown Outreach and Housing Resource Services (DOHRS) program, which provides drop-in advocacy, housing and financial navigation services for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, those in need of housing stability have a place to go for assistance.

Our housing and support services are accessible to all people, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation. Pacifica Housing has extensive experience supporting vulnerable populations, including 2SLGBT2QIA+, Indigenous populations, seniors, those who struggle with substance misuse disorder and those affected by domestic violence and physical and/or mental health challenges.

With programs and services delivered across the Greater Victoria region and Nanaimo, and numerous partners, such as BC Housing, Island Health, Reaching Home via the Government of Canada, the Capital Regional District (CRD), City of Victoria and Community Living BC, Pacifica Housing is ideally suited to provide encampment outreach in the City of Victoria with a housing focus.

While there are many different types of outreach services, encampment outreach with a housing focus is a systematic approach whereby assessments and referrals are primarily related to finding suitable housing for vulnerable individuals, while connecting them to the supports and resources needed to maintain long-term stability. Individuals living in encampments need a variety of basic resources to subsist, and those resources are available through other organizations. In the proposed approach, Pacifica Housing will focus on housing.

Pacifica Housing will be the City of Victoria's eyes and ears on the ground and a partner in understanding who the unhoused individuals are and what their needs are. We will also be a collaborative partner as we seek to work alongside City of Victoria, the Province and community partners in accelerating the closure of encampments in favor of adequate shelter and housing.

# 2 PROPONENT EXPERIENCE

# 2.1 ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW AND MANDATE

Pacifica Housing initially grew out of the Innovative Housing Society (IHS), a housing resource group, formed in the early 1980s with funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Registered as a non-profit charitable organization (CRN: 122654999 RR0001) since then, Pacifica Housing has grown to become a multi-faceted not-for-profit provider of affordable housing and support services for low-income families, seniors, persons with a disability and adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the Greater Victoria area and Nanaimo Regional District. Those who participate in our programs often face complex issues like substance misuse, chronic homelessness, criminal justice system involvement and compromised physical and/or mental health.

Our Vision: Equitable housing in pursuit of thriving communities.

**Our Mission:** To advance independence of individuals and families through equitable housing and supportive services.

#### **Our Values:**

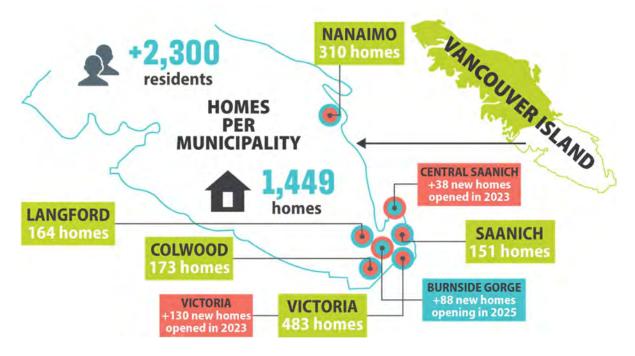
- Authenticity Finding congruence inside and outside Pacifica through open and honest speech and action.
- **Leadership** Courageously creating opportunities through collaboration where there were none before
- Respect Showing that everyone has value by treating people with dignity, compassion, and unconditional kindness.
- Social Justice Challenging an unjust status quo so that everyone can enjoy fair and equitable access to their economic, political and social rights.

Governed by a Board of Directors, Pacifica Housing is a dynamic and growing organization with about 160 employees situated in the Greater Victoria and Nanaimo regions. Our growing portfolio of 41 buildings (which includes housing the organization either owns or operates) provides affordable homes for over 2,300 people and our support services provide assistance to a growing number of those struggling to find and keep safe, stable and appropriate housing in the region. This includes 1,449 homes across Greater Victoria and Nanaimo, comprised of 32 independent living buildings, seven supportive housing buildings, one supported seniors lodge and one community services building. We currently have one development project in the construction phase, which will add 88 units of affordable housing to our portfolio by the end of 2025.

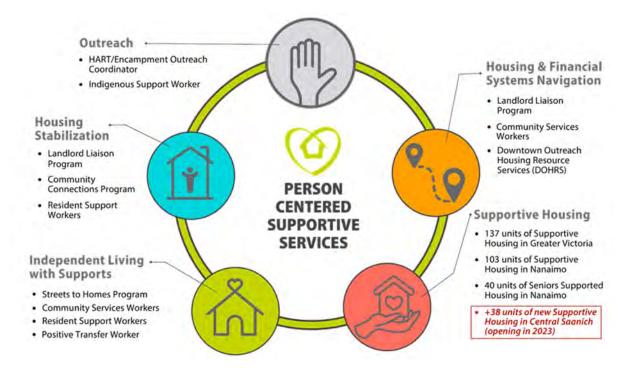
# Pacifica Housing on the Housing Continuum



As one of the largest affordable housing operators on Vancouver Island, Pacifica Housing provides almost 1,450 units of safe and affordable quality rentals across the housing continuum to meet the needs of the entire community, including supportive housing serving individuals with a history of homelessness, townhouse complexes for low-income families and single parents and seniors supported housing. These properties provide a mix of deep subsidy, rent-geared-to-income, and low-end market housing to make them accessible to those of all income levels.



# 2.2 SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL



Our service delivery model incorporates client-centered care and harm reduction philosophies with integrated support services that empower individuals to be at the center of their own care. At our core, we believe in the Housing First philosophy; our organization knows that when people have access to safe and affordable homes, they are more successful in addressing health, family and other issues so that they can increase their individual capability and reach their highest potential. Pacifica Housing's support services and housing options are accessible to all people, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

#### 2.3 RELATED WORK IN COMMUNITY

# ENCAMPMENT OUTREACH – HOUSING ACTION RESPONSE TEAM (HART) (GREATER VICTORIA, 2018 – PRESENT)

The HART program brings together government, non-profit outreach workers, police, bylaw and health in one team to provide assessments, information and support for individuals experiencing public homelessness. Pacifica Housing became a member of the team in 2018, as part of a coordinated effort to support chronically homeless people living at an encampment in Regina Park.

As part of the HART team, Pacifica Housing:

- Engages those who are experiencing homelessness and living in public spaces;
- Works with the individual to complete a client needs assessment,
- Refers clients to income assistance, using the Homeless Application Protocol;
- Provides linkages to community supports; and,
- Develops a case plan for clients willing to participate.

# POSITIVE TRANSFER PROGRAM (GREATER VICTORIA, 2021 – PRESENT)

Pacifica Housing's Positive Transfer worker provides landlord liaison and housing navigation services in collaboration with other local agencies, on behalf of their clients and case workers, to support those transitioning to independent-living situations from supportive housing or shelters. Through the local Coordinated Access and Assessment (CAA) initiative, this program identifies individuals ready to take the next step to available independent housing units in the region, most often available affordable units in Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC) units.

# HOUSING & FINANCIAL SYSTEMS NAVIGATION – DOHRS (GREATER VICTORIA, 2009 – PRESENT)

DOHRS is a drop-in center operated by Pacifica Housing in downtown Victoria that provides advocacy, housing and financial navigation services to families and individuals over the age of 19 who are currently homeless, or at risk of homelessness by directly engaging with clients. The support services offered through DOHRS include: completing needs assessments, assisting clients with housing applications and paperwork, assistance with accessing rent subsidies, referring clients to appropriate housing options and developing interim support plans as needed.

# INDEPENDENT LIVING WITH SUPPORTS – STREETS TO HOMES (S2H) (GREATER VICTORIA, 2010 – PRESENT)

S2H is a Housing First systems-approach program that moves adults with a history of chronic and/or episodic homelessness directly into private market housing, while providing customized supports in the Greater Victoria region. Using this approach, S2H provides assistance in securing rent subsidies and private-market housing and offers intensive case management and supports through direct service delivery, as well as referrals to community resources. Clients are moved from homelessness into healthy state of housing security, with no preconditions.

#### 3 SCOPE OF WORK

#### 3.1 PHASE I

Pacifica Housing proposes to move systematically through specific parks in the city of Victoria where encampments are located, and conduct in depth assessments of unhoused individuals. These comprehensive assessments will be done using the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) at Topaz, Regatta Landing, Stadacona and Hollywood parks. Through these assessments, Pacifica Housing outreach staff will be able to better understand the context around each individual's history of chronic homelessness, what health and other resources they may need assistance connecting to, and what kind of housing is most appropriate for these individuals, in order to attain better long term outcomes.

This information will help inform what kind of potential housing or shelter is currently available in the city and what the gaps in housing and services are for these individuals. This information and themes will be shared with the City of Victoria to assist in mid to long-term decision-making, while respecting individual's privacy. The work will be done with the understanding that the City is working towards disallowing camping in all parks.

#### 3.2 PHASE II

The information collected will be used to support referring individuals to a variety of resources they may require in order to access housing, including but not limited to ministry services, housing application assistance, and transportation to viewings. Where an individual is considered to have the potential to move into independent-living housing, they will be attached to available rent supplements (Pacifica Housing manages a number on behalf of the Province) and a search for rental housing will begin.

Where individuals are in need of supportive housing, Pacifica Housing will work through the Coordinated Access and Assessment system in order to assist in finding appropriate placement. As many individuals are likely already registered in the system, it may be difficult to place them if they are not part of a priority group or face other barriers. We are committed to working with other community-based organizations including our peer non-profit housing providers, BC Housing and Island Health to identify and advocate for solutions.

#### 3.3 PHASE III

Where housing has been identified, Pacifica Housing outreach staff will support clients to move to the sites and set up their new home. This includes coordinating viewings, liaising with landlords on behalf of clients and case workers, completing application forms, accessing household items such as beds and kitchenware, and assisting with the move.

In addition, our outreach workers will follow individuals for 3 months to support stabilization. The team will work with the landlord and the client to problem-solve and resolve disputes/disagreements and following up with landlords on a regular basis to mitigate potential housing retention issues before they escalate.

Specific actions will include:

- Assisting with intake, community outreach to specialized populations, referrals and paperwork for basic needs and services, and referrals to community resources;
- Providing advocacy, support, and guidance, including crisis intervention;
- Housing referral services such as contacting and meeting landlords, assisting with housing

- applications for market rent, subsidized and supportive housing;
- Interim non-medical case management services during the period of assessment and placement into housing; and,
- Ongoing support services in areas such as financial, personal, and home care.

#### Pacifica Housing Outreach staff will:

- 1. Directly engage clients where they are situated;
- 2. Complete intake, consent form and assessment of each client;
- 3. Offering a support plan for each client;
- 4. Referring clients to appropriate housing options;
- 5. Referring clients to income assistance and support services as identified by their individualized support plan;
- 6. Clients are provided with a rental supplement where appropriate;
- 7. Tenancy support and skills training are provided to support housing stability and independence; and,
- 8. Follow up and ongoing support to resident is provided as appropriate for a period of 3 months once housed.

#### 4 TIMELINE AND REPORTING

Pacifica Housing would conduct the above-noted activities in a concurrent manner for a period of 6 months for up to 25 clients. This will allow for sufficient time to assess individuals, identify housing as well as gaps in availability, while the Province identifies additional sites and completes sites currently under construction. Pacifica Housing will provide monthly updates on activities, progress and barriers.

We unfortunately, cannot commit to finding housing for every single person, as there are many factors we cannot control. However, we commit to being strong advocates, that the needs of the clients are understood, and that gaps in resources are clearly identified so that we may collaboratively advocate for them to be delivered. We also commit to working with community and Provincial partners in order to seek effective solutions.

#### **5 INVESTMENT**

\$50,000.

The proposed investment amount includes a assigning 2 staff to conduct VATs and support each other in a way that ensures safety while in the community. It includes undertaking all activities noted in the scope including household set up, as well as administrative costs related to accessing Pacifica's infrastructure in order to do the work for the period of 6 months for up to 25 clients.

2464.4216



# CITY OF VICTORIA ENCAMPMENT OUTREACH WITH A HOUSING FOCUS

**EXTENSION PROPOSAL** 

Submission: December 05, 2024

#### SUBMITTED BY:

Carolina Ibarra, CEO
Pacifica Housing Advisory Association
827 Fisgard Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1R9

P: (250) 385 – 2131 extension 2107 E: cibarra@pacificahousing.ca

#### 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Our housing and support services are accessible to all people, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation. Pacifica Housing has extensive experience supporting vulnerable populations, including 2SLGBT2QIA+, Indigenous populations, seniors, those who struggle with substance misuse disorder and those affected by domestic violence and physical and/or mental health challenges.

With programs and services delivered across the Greater Victoria region and Nanaimo, and numerous partners, such as BC Housing, Island Health, Reaching Home via the Government of Canada, the Capital Regional District (CRD), City of Victoria and Community Living BC, Pacifica Housing is ideally suited to provide encampment outreach in the City of Victoria with a housing focus.

While there are many different types of outreach services, encampment outreach with a housing focus is a systematic approach whereby assessments and referrals are primarily related to finding suitable housing for vulnerable individuals, while connecting them to the supports and resources needed to maintain long-term stability. Individuals living in encampments need a variety of basic resources to subsist, and those resources are available through other organizations. In the proposed approach, Pacifica Housing will focus on housing.

Pacifica Housing will be the City of Victoria's eyes and ears on the ground and a partner in understanding who the unhoused individuals are and what their needs are. We will also be a collaborative partner as we seek to work alongside City of Victoria, the Province and community partners in accelerating the phasing out of encampments in favor of adequate shelter and housing.

The proposed scope of work would be a continuation of work undertaken on behalf of the City of Victoria since 2023 and each phase would continue to take place concurrently.

#### SCOPE OF WORK

#### 1.1 PHASEI

Pacifica Housing will continue to move systematically through specific parks and public areas in the city of Victoria where encampments are located, and conduct in depth assessments of unhoused individuals. These comprehensive assessments will be done using the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT). Through these assessments, Pacifica Housing outreach staff will be able to better understand the context around each individual's history of chronic homelessness, what health and other resources they may need assistance connecting to, and what kind of housing is most appropriate for these individuals, in order to attain better long-term outcomes.

This information will help inform what kind of potential housing or shelter is currently available in the city and what the gaps in housing and services are for these individuals. This information and themes will be shared with the City of Victoria to assist in mid to long-term decision-making, while respecting individual's privacy. Pacifica Housing will work with City of Victoria staff to prioritize geographical areas of focus at any given time.

#### 1.2 PHASE II

The information collected will be used to support referring individuals to a variety of resources they may require in order to access housing, including but not limited to ministry services, housing application assistance, and transportation to viewings. Where an individual is considered to have the potential to move into independent-living housing, they will be attached to available rent supplements and a search for rental housing will begin.

Where individuals are in need of supportive housing, Pacifica Housing will work through the Coordinated Access and Assessment system in order to assist in finding appropriate placement. We are committed to working with other community-based organizations including our peer non-profit housing providers, BC Housing and Island Health to identify and advocate for solutions.

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Where housing has been identified, Pacifica Housing outreach staff will support clients to move to the sites and set up their new home. This includes coordinating viewings, liaising with landlords on behalf of clients and case workers, completing application forms, accessing household items such as beds and kitchenware, and assisting with the move.

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Specific actions will include:

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- 8. Follow up and ongoing support to resident is provided as appropriate for a period of 3 months once housed.

#### 2 TIMELINE AND REPORTING

Pacifica Housing would conduct the above-noted activities in a concurrent manner for a period of 12 months for up to 25 clients. This will allow for sufficient time to assess individuals, identify housing as well as gaps in availability, while the Province identifies additional sites and completes sites currently under construction. Pacifica Housing will provide monthly updates on activities, progress and barriers.

We unfortunately, cannot commit to finding housing for every single person, as there are many factors we cannot control. However, we commit to being strong advocates, that the needs of the clients are understood, and that gaps in resources are clearly identified so that we may collaboratively advocate for them to be delivered. We also commit to working with community and Provincial partners in order to seek effective solutions.

#### 3 INVESTMENT

\$100,000, plus GST.

The proposed investment amount includes assigning a minimum of one staff member and maximum of two as required at any given time to conduct VATs and support individuals in a way that ensures safety while in the community. It includes undertaking all activities noted in the scope including household set up, as well as administrative costs related to accessing Pacifica's infrastructure in order to do the work for the period of 12 months for up to 25 clients.

## **Belonging in BC:**

A collaborative plan to prevent and reduce homelessness

Initial Phase 2022-2025



We acknowledge with respect and gratitude this report was produced on the territories of the Ləkwəŋən peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt (Xwsepsum) Nations, and WSÁNEĆ Nations

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## Message from the B.C. Minister of Housing



Everyone deserves a safe, stable, and supportive place to call home, and to feel a sense of belonging in B.C. That's why one of the first actions our government took in September 2017 was to work with partners to create thousands of new supportive homes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Our actions responded to years where homelessness tripled, due to a lack of investment in housing, and aggressive cuts to mental health and addictions services and supports for at-risk youth that left an entire generation to grow up without supports. By 2017, there were nearly 2,500 more people living on the street in Metro Vancouver than in 2001.

By opening new homes with supports, we made important progress and stopped increases in homelessness we were seeing under the old government. In 2020,

while there were specific challenges in different areas of the province, for the first time in two decades – overall numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Metro Vancouver stabilized. We worked with communities to resolve encampments in places like Maple Ridge, Nanaimo and Whalley. We had so much more work to do to provide homes for people, but we were making significant progress together.

Then the pandemic upended everything. Shelters were forced to reduce capacity, people who previously might have been couch surfing with friends were forced to live rough, the toxic drug crisis became even more acute and mental health challenges increased for everyone in B.C. – including people experiencing homelessness. As we've come through the pandemic we've also seen record numbers of people moving to B.C. and new pressures of global inflation. While we need these new British Columbians to respond to labour shortages, it has added pressure to our already stretched housing market, effectively pushing people out the bottom.

We took action, leasing thousands of hotel rooms during the pandemic and continuing to open new supportive housing – allowing us to resolve encampments in Vancouver and Victoria. Adding new complex care housing for people who need more intensive mental health and substance use supports that go beyond the supports provided in supportive housing. We're also going upstream – launching new supports to address the root causes of homelessness and prevent people from losing their homes in the first place. And there's more to come through Budget 2023 – building more homes for people and expanding supports for communities and people sheltering in encampments so they can move forward, all as we get new housing built and build a healthy housing ecosystem

This document, *Belonging in BC*, brings together the wide range of initiatives and strategies our government is developing and implementing to ensure people do not become homelessness, and that if they do, they can quickly find a stable home. It recognizes the role systemic racism, discrimination and colonialism play in homelessness and reminds us that we all have – and deserve – a place to belong. It also shows the lack of sufficient action and investment in housing in the past that is a significant factor in the current housing crisis. That's why our government has made investing in housing such a central priority. With the creation of a new standalone Ministry of Housing, we won't let up in our work with all levels of government, Indigenous people, the non-profit sector, developers and the construction industry to ensure we have the housing we need now – and into the future.

We're determined to get people the care and supports they need and transform our systems to end the cycle of people falling through the gaps.

We have accomplished much, but much more remains. We are committed to getting the job done so that everyone has a place to belong in B.C.

Ravi Kahlon Minister of Housing

### **Summary**

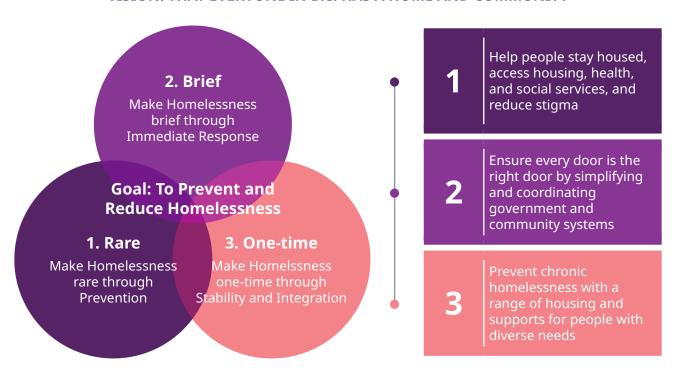
Belonging in BC is a comprehensive Homelessness Plan for the Province, grounded in prioritizing cultural safety, Indigenous¹ and community partnerships, and the inclusion of people with diverse identities and needs. Since 2017, Government has taken significant actions to address homelessness through multiple ministries and partners. This Plan brings together ministry, Indigenous and community partners on a shared path with a plan and policy framework to guide coordinated actions.

The word *belonging* refers not only to having a physical space to call home but also to embracing people experiencing or at risk of homelessness as valuable and cared for members of communities. It recognizes the role systemic racism, discrimination and colonialism plays in homelessness and reminds us that we all have – and deserve – a place to belong.

This Plan sets out the next steps and a framework to be implemented over the next three to five years in partnership with Indigenous peoples and organizations, communities and all levels of government. It is an iterative, responsive and living Plan that builds on successes and measured impacts for future phases.

The vision of the Plan is that B.C. is a place where everyone has a home and community, and the overarching goals are to prevent and reduce homelessness; and to ensure that when it does occur, it is rare, brief and one-time. These goals are to be achieved through three strategic paths: prevention, immediate response, and stability and community integration.

#### VISION: THAT EVERYONE IN B.C. HAS A HOME AND COMMUNITY



<sup>1</sup> Indigenous includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples living in B.C., as well as people who identify as Indigenous but due to the impacts of colonization and trauma may not know or choose to identify with a distinct group or who prefer intersectional identifiers.

Ministries and partners are working together in an unprecedented way to deliver an aligned and overarching Plan made up of different components, including:

- Complex care housing
- Supporting youth transitions from care; including new rent supports
- The new Provincial Homeless Encampment and Action Response Teams (HEART) and Homeless Encampment Action Response for Temporary Housing (HEARTH) initiative to provide for rapid, coordinated, multidisciplinary responses when encampments arise
- A new supported rent supplement program, including the Indigenous-led Culturally Aligned Integrated Supports initiative (Appendix C)
- More Community Integration Specialists to ensure people in need, including those at risk of or experiencing homelessness, are aware of and connected to income supports and government programs that can help them
- Permanent housing for people at-risk of and experiencing homelessness, including those in temporary COVID-19 response spaces
- Support for people in encampments to stay safe and healthy as homes get built, and to transition to housing
- Resources for community-based homelessness responses and research, initiatives to address stigma, and advisory committees for ongoing collaboration; Homelessness Community Action Grants
- Funding for Indigenous collaboration to prioritize Indigenous-led components and measured impacts throughout the Plan

Immediate actions are backed by more than \$633 million in new funding committed in Budget 2022 (over three years) and \$1.5 billion in Budget 2023 to help thousands of people maintain and access housing and supports. This is in addition to substantial investments in affordable housing and programs that support people with a range of needs who may be at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The Plan is part of a continuum of broader investments by the B.C. government to reduce and prevent homelessness, and to build more affordable, secure housing in the immediate and long term. It is informed directly from community and Indigenous partners, as well as Persons with Lived Experience of Homelessness (PWLE) and builds in ongoing engagement and collaboration.

"I think a lot about the shelter being a home environment, saying at end of day, 'How was your day, can I get you tea or help with laundry?'... if you lived with roommates, family or partner you would have a warm welcome and that's what I want. Our spaces we offer, services are so institutional and colonial. We have a fear of treating people in a home environment. 'They'll get too comfortable,' I hear. But I think people have a right to feel comfortable and at home, wherever home is that day ... to go to bed feeling rested and respected and happy ... a person who is welcomed."

Quotes from engagements with People with Lived Experience (PWLE)

## Introduction: An urgent need for action

After significant progress was made pre-pandemic providing housing with supports for thousands of people with nowhere to live, homelessness is once again growing in B.C., made worse by the housing and drug toxicity crises and global inflation. In addition to the impacts on individuals, communities feel more pressure to respond. Across the province, it is estimated that 23,400 people experienced homelessness at one time between January and December 2020, with over half experiencing chronic homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic made life harder for people facing homelessness – leading to an increase in displacement and people sheltering outdoors. British Columbians are more aware of friends, family and community members who face multiple barriers to stable housing. They also know those facing homelessness are in increasingly precarious and unsafe environments. We must also recognize the growing impacts of climate change and frequency of damaging weather events. In recent years, forest fires, floods, atmospheric rivers, heat dome and cold snaps have led to displacement, harm and even deaths of vulnerable people.

Government worked fast during the pandemic to further step up our work to connect people to health, social and income supports and to provide indoor spaces, housing to self-isolate and shelter. In Fall 2020, the Minister of Attorney General and Responsible for Housing was given the mandate from the Premier to "lead government's efforts to address homelessness by implementing a homelessness strategy," with the support of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Ministry of Children and Family Development and Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

This task was further supported by the 2022 mandate to the new Minister of Housing to "Expand on the new homelessness supports launched in Budget 2022, including long-term housing to address encampments," as well as related mandate actions to support the development of new housing, Indigenous housing and improved supports and well-being for people in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside – in collaboration with the Ministers of Health, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Public Safety and Solicitor General, as well as Indigenous Peoples and Nations, external partners, and others.

We are building on years of work across government and with communities to chart a path for addressing homelessness that responds to urgent needs and spells out our long-term vision. Every level of government, every community and every person has a role in preventing and reducing homelessness.

To that end, our new Homelessness Plan is rooted in collaboration, built on B.C.'s commitments under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and Reconciliation through partnerships with Indigenous people, Nations, and community-based organizations, and informed by the diverse voices most impacted by its implementation, including people with lived experienced of homelessness and those who support them.

<sup>2</sup> Province of B.C. (2021). Preventing & Reducing Homelessness Integrated Data Project. Chronic homelessness is defined as a period of six months or more.

## **Understanding Homelessness in B.C.**

In Canada, social agencies and academic researchers generally define homelessness as a situation where a person or families live without stable, permanent, appropriate housing – or the ability to acquire it. The experience of homelessness can be short, one-time, a cycle or long-term. Homelessness can include people sheltering outdoors, sleeping in tents, cars, and emergency shelters, and staying at one place then another.

"When I was homeless, I called it houseless because my tent was my home. I just didn't have a house."

Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the longer it continues, the more it impacts their physical and mental health, and sense of community belonging. Homelessness is defined in different ways, whether it is a more formal description of a person lacking a safe, suitable place to stay or live or whether it is a description of a person disconnected from the elements of home.<sup>3</sup>

Homelessness is both a complex societal issue and a deeply personal experience typically triggered by a combination of factors – individual, structural, and systemic – and compounded by significant events on a local, national and global scale such as a global pandemic.

The overarching driver of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing and poverty. Many people are only a single paycheque away from not being able to maintain a roof over their heads – particularly given added pressures of global inflation.

Homelessness also results from systemic and social barriers, including the legacy of colonialism; a lack of affordable and appropriate housing; historical underinvestment in housing infrastructure; systemic racism and discrimination; and strains on the financial, mental, physical, and cognitive health of at-risk individuals who may also be navigating personal trauma.

Statistics Canada data shows more than 15% of all B.C. households – including nearly half of all renters – pay more than 30% of their income on housing and vacancy rates remain below three per cent. We have already taken important steps to respond through initiatives such as the Homes for BC: A 30-Point Plan to Address Housing Affordability and the 2019 TogetherBC: Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as in the significant and innovative responses during the COVID-19 pandemic and concurrent toxic drug and housing crises.

"As far as homelessness goes, everybody needs to realize that everybody is one paycheque away from being homeless. I know that doesn't really -- it's hard for some people to put a grasp on that, but it only takes one small step back and you're homeless, and it could happen to anybody. I've met people in good jobs, really good jobs, well-educated people, that are now homeless, because something came up in their life that required money, as usual, and it set people back. It only takes a little bit."

"This is a long story, but I ended up on the streets – you know, but mostly to put it in a nutshell was I got injured and I couldn't work any longer. So little by little as all the – like, the social nets fell, I fell down each net little by little and came to the end of the net, which is social welfare, right? And I couldn't afford my family any longer, and I picked up an addiction."

<sup>3</sup> The Government of B.C. defines homelessness as being without a permanent address and chronic homelessness as a period of more than six months or frequent shelter visits in a given period of time.

#### Who experiences homelessness in B.C.?

The experience of homelessness is not limited to any gender, age, race, place or person – yet many people are disproportionately impacted due to these factors. The Province has numerous sources of insight to inform our understanding of who experiences homelessness and why. Since 2017, B.C. has conducted **Province-wide Point-in-Time Homeless Counts**,<sup>4</sup> conducted on a given night to deepen understanding of who is experiencing homelessness, how it manifests in different communities, and what has shifted over time. The most recent count for 2020/21:

- A total of 8,665 people were experiencing homelessness in 25 communities on a given night an 11% increase from 2018. Of this total, 38% of people were unsheltered and 62% experiencing chronic homelessness. 222 children under 19 were counted. The majority of people (54%) had lived in the community for 10 years or more.
- For the first time, the 2020 Homeless Count survey included a question specifically on race.
   Indigenous people were disproportionately represented in the counts at 39% compared to comprising six per cent of B.C.'s population. Black, South Asian and Latin American people were also overrepresented.

The majority of those surveyed identified as male (68%), with 30% identifying as female and two per cent as another gender. Gender-based violence and systemic oppression create additional risks for women and gender diverse people experiencing homelessness to sleep outdoors or in shelters, leading to systemic undercounting of this population of "hidden homeless".

- A total of 30% of people cited insufficient income as primary reason for housing loss, followed by substance use issues (22 per cent).
- Youth (under 25) made up 11% of those surveyed, and 36% of everyone surveyed said they were currently or had been a youth in government care.
- The next homeless count is taking place throughout Spring 2023.

"Access to affordable housing would be wonderful. I've been looking but the prices are crazy. I run into a lot of places where the prices are just way too high. I'm on PWD [Persons with Disabilities benefit]. Last time I looked at a bachelor suite, it was \$1,300. That's not just out of my price range, it's out of my entire income."

<sup>4</sup> https://www.bchousing.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2020-21-BC-Homeless-Counts.pdf

The Preventing & Reducing Homelessness Integrated Data Project through the BC Data Innovation Program began in 2019 as a partnership between the then Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Ministry of Citizen Services and BC Housing. The Ministry of Housing is now a lead partner. For the first time, we are able to pull together data on a total number of people who experienced homelessness during a given year – instead of just a point in time count on a given day. Data sets to measure homelessness include people who receive income or disability assistance with no fixed address for a period of three months or more as well as those who utilize shelters. Initial findings showed:



The Office of the Human Rights Commissioner recognized the B.C. government's Data Innovation Program as an example of a strong approach to protecting the privacy of personal information while still sharing demographic data across public bodies. The program is based on world-leading best practices for managing safe access and use of confidential or sensitive information. Future work of this project can align with Anti-Racism Initiatives as datasets are revised to collect race-based data, with the purpose of understanding the impacts of racism and addressing systemic inequalities.

## **Indigenous Homelessness**

Indigenous peoples have distinct and diverse identities and ways of knowing that are to be respected and learned from on the path to reconciliation. In many Indigenous worldviews, homelessness is defined as broader than lacking a physical place to live. Indigenous homelessness describes individuals, families, and communities experience of isolation from relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, and languages, and disconnection from the cultural, spiritual, emotional, or physical aspects of Indigenous identity.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous peoples' experiences of homelessness must be understood within the context of colonialism and its disproportionate and continued impact on Indigenous peoples, communities, families, Nations, and cultures.

In British Columbia, 78 per cent<sup>6</sup> of Indigenous peoples from First Nation, Métis, Inuit or other backgrounds live in urban and off-reserve areas by choice, necessity or systemic displacement. This is why the Provincial Homelessness Plan takes a distinctions-based, inclusive and intersectional approach to ensure the people most in need are centred. Indigenous-led and serving organizations are a pillar of Government's plan to address homelessness and First Nations, Métis and Inuit leadership are key partners.

The Province supports the external-to-government, Indigenous-led BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy,<sup>7</sup> developed by an the BC Indigenous Homelessness Steering Committee comprised of 18 Indigenous-serving organizations and through engagement with Indigenous peoples across the Province – including First Nations, Métis and Inuit people with distinct identities, as well as urban, rural and northern Indigenous populations.

The BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy makes 33 Recommendations to Government that align with the strategic pillars and goals of the *Belonging in BC* Homelessness Plan, with the recognition that there is a need for Indigenous-led approaches to empower Indigenous people and support work already

underway through Indigenous organizations and community. This approach is supported by Article 23 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act: "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing, and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions."

The Province is committed to working with the BC Indigenous Homelessness Steering Committee members to address and support their implementation of the actions in alignment with government's current and future work.

"Well, we are the original People and we are the salt of the earth, and the daily discrimination that we face is not something – it's not one a day happening, it's every time you turn around, every time you go down the street, you run into some form of discrimination, whether it's stigma or what's been perceived about you."

<sup>5</sup> Thistle, J. (2017.) Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

<sup>6</sup> https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/supporting-communities/urban-off-reserve-aboriginal-people

<sup>7</sup> https://www.ahma-bc.org/bcindigenoushomelessness

## **Building a Homelessness Plan**

The *Belonging in BC* Homelessness Plan builds on input from multiple government initiatives and targeted engagements across the province with community partners, Indigenous organizations and Nations, and people with lived experience. Partnerships with organizations serving urban Indigenous and racialized peoples, people living with disabilities (including those with brain injury and cognitive issues),<sup>8</sup> women, youth, seniors, people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ and others with diverse needs are crucial to ensure people are included in the design and delivery of programs meant to support them. This includes helping organizations build capacity and resources.

This new plan is built on a commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and organizations. It recognizes the unique and diverse intersections of Indigenous identities (including 2SLGBTQAI+) and will prioritize Indigenous-led organizations and initiatives to build capacity and expertise over time. It will be informed and guided by an Indigenous Advisory role (one of the plan's actions) to ensure ongoing engagement.

We heard a call from Indigenous and community partners to root the Plan in cultural safety, which is an outcome of respectful, safe and inclusive interaction free of harm and discrimination. **Cultural Safety Principles**, developed with input from Indigenous and community partners, guide the Plan, and include:

- Listening to and learning from Indigenous and racialized communities as the experts in the needs of their community, and responding respectfully;
- Ensuring diversity within populations is respected and accommodated, with resulting actions viewed through a decolonized, trauma-informed, and intersectional lens;
- Ongoing development of cultural competency and humility are integrated into all processes, policies, and decision-making;
- Ensuring programs and policies benefit Indigenous and racialized peoples in B.C. by furthering self-determined goals;
- Creating relationships with these communities that are collaborative, authentic, ongoing, and reciprocal; and
- Ensuring that processes are transparent, accessible, and provide opportunities for mutual capacity-building between government, Indigenous, and racialized communities.

**Inclusive** 

Responsive

<sup>8</sup> There are significant correlations with brain injury, cognitive issues and risk of homelessness. https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/homelessness/

## **Engagement and Inclusion**

Engagement and collaboration to further develop and implement the Plan is ongoing, and includes building relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and racialized peoples and representative organizations to address specific community needs and long-term planning.

From the beginning we have sought to include the people who are directly and personally impacted by homelessness. Recognizing that personal experiences and identities will require tailored approaches to addressing homelessness, we will continue our collaborative engagement to better understand the needs of diverse populations, including but not limited to:

- First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous people
- Racialized and immigrant communities
- Rural and urban communities
- People living with disabilities, including those with brain injury and cognitive issues
- People with mental health and substance use challenges
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people
- Women
- · Youth (in and out of care)
- Seniors
- Veterans

The Plan builds on previous and concurrent engagements and includes targeted engagements with people with lived experiences of homelessness, Indigenous partners and key partner organizations. This includes:

- Concurrent Homelessness Plan engagements leveraged: Youth Transitions (Ministry of Children and Family Development), Complex Care Housing and Adult Substance Use Framework (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions) and others.
- **Summer 2021**: Ministry of Housing staff engaged with people with lived experience of homelessness in seven communities across all regions of the province.
- Winter 2022: Cultural safety principles engagement and development with organizations serving Indigenous and racialized people.
- Spring/Summer 2022 external partner engagement and Plan feedback:
  - BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy Steering Committee
  - Homelessness Services Association of BC
  - Engaged Communities Canada Society
  - Surrey Area Network of Substance Users
  - BC Non-Profit Housing Association
  - Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness
  - BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
  - First Nations Leadership Council

- Indigenous engagement (ongoing):
  - Summer 2022 engagement invitation to all First Nations and Métis leadership
  - Fall 2022 targeted outreach to First Nations communities
- **Fall 2022 engagement sessions** on an Integrated Support Framework. This engagement aimed to help confirm clinical and non-clinical wraparound supports and service navigation under this new model of care **See Appendix C**:
  - More than 100 participants, nine sessions, five regions
  - Ministries, services providers, First Nations, local governments community partners

Ongoing engagement and collaboration are built into the Plan actions and supported by funding, including the creation of advisory committees for Indigenous Peoples and People with Lived Experience of Homelessness.

In developing this plan, ministries and community partners came together for the first time to build complementary plans addressing homelessness. Consistent feedback themes included:

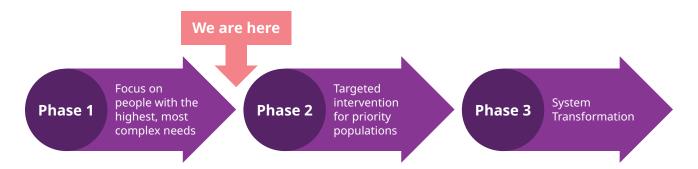
- · Housing is a human right and a humanitarian issue;
- Affordability, low incomes and a lack of affordable places to live are the biggest barriers to stable housing;
- Basic needs like food, clothing, washrooms and laundry facilities must be met before people can access other services;
- · Challenges navigating government and community services;
- Social, cultural and personal identities impact how people experience homelessness, and experiences of racism and stigma prevent people from accessing important services and health;
- Overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, and those with distinct needs, requires targeted, co-developed and commensurate supports;
- Homelessness looks different in rural areas than urban centres, and each experience presents unique challenges as well as opportunities;
- Homelessness responses and planning needs to address climate change and impacts;
- People want, and deserve, a home that is welcoming, safe and fosters community.

"My youth outreach worker saved my life. She was so amazing. I think about her often when I think about my past and being on the streets....She came with me for important stuff: when I got my wisdom teeth removed; she showed up for my grad; she just knew what was important. The stuff you'd expect your parents to show up for, she thought about that."

The new *Belonging in BC* Homelessness Plan responds directly to this input through following actions and more:

- Creating new housing options, including a wraparound support rent supplement program to help more people access and maintain housing in their community without waiting for new housing to be built;
- Investing in basic needs, like food security and personal living items, and supports to help people
  experiencing homelessness navigate community and government services through an Integrated
  Support Framework;
- Grounding the continued development and implementation of the Plan in an understanding that personal experiences and identities will require distinct approaches;
- Partnering with First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous and community organizations to target supports in implementation and build capacity for local response;
- Building collaborative engagement with diverse communities into all aspects of the strategic plan actions;
- Providing tools for communities to support those at risk or experiencing homelessness in ways
  that work for and are defined by them, in recognition that communities are experts in their
  own needs.

### Phase One of the BC Homelessness Plan



#### Strategic goals

THREE OVERARCHING GOALS					
Prevention	Immediate Response	Stability & Integration			
Make homelessness rare. Help people at risk stay housed with the supports they need to pay rent, access housing, health, and social services, and reduce stigma	Make homelessness brief. Ensure every door someone might knock on to end or prevent homelessness is the "right" door by simplifying and coordinating government and community systems	Make homelessness one- time. Prevent chronic homelessness by providing a range of affordable housing for people with diverse needs and integrating supports that promote community inclusion and belonging			
SUPPORTED BY FOUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS: WE AIM TO					

- 1. Transform housing and health systems and programs to reduce barriers to support.
- 2. Strengthen community partnerships to build capacity and respond to local needs.
- 3. Ensure programming and service delivery includes input from people with distinct needs and perspectives
- **4.** Apply better data on drivers and impacts of homelessness to improve policy and program design and development.

#### **Actions**

#### 1. Transform housing and health systems and programs to reduce barriers to support

#### Phase One actions through Budget 2022 include:

- Complex Care Housing: An innovative model providing housing with intensive health, mental health care and additional supports for people struggling with complex substance use and mental health issues.
- Permanent Housing Plan: This plan ensures 3,000+ people in temporary and leased COVID-19 spaces will transition to permanent housing through new housing investments and by creating space in supportive housing in 2022/23.
- Supported Rent Supplement Program: A new wraparound support rent supplement program
  so more people experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access market rental housing
  when they are ready, and receive the clinical and non-clinical supports they need outside of a
  congregate living setting.
- Integrated Support Framework: A new integrated and coordinated service model to deliver a
  suite of wraparound supports to improve stability, choice/personal agency and inclusion for
  people at risk of or experiencing homelessness across unsheltered and housing settings. Initial
  phase will be the supported rent supplement program.

#### Phase One/Two actions through Budget 2023 include:

- Complex Care Housing: 240 additional purpose-built Complex Care Housing units at approximately 12 locations across the province to support people with more complex mental health and addictions challenges. These units provide supports to those experiencing overlapping mental health challenges, developmental disabilities, substance abuse issues, trauma, and/or acquired brain injuries.
- Housing with Integrated Supports: 3,800 additional supportive housing units with increased supports for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.
- Homelessness Supports: Increased health supports, housing access, social inclusion and system navigation in the Homelessness Plan that build and expand over time; the Integrated Support Framework.
- Immediate Shelter & Supports: Homeless Encampment Action Response for Temporary Housing (HEARTH) includes funding for emergency housing, shelter options and immediate coordinated supports to assist people in encampments or sheltering in public spaces.
- Additional funding for the successful BC Rent Bank program, through which 18 rent banks across
  the province help people with low incomes maintain and access rental housing, preventing
  homelessness and evictions.
- Transform government systems so they are more accessible, inclusive, and easy to navigate. Every door should be the right door to exit homelessness.

## 2. Strengthen community and Indigenous partnerships to build capacity and respond to local needs.

#### Phase One actions through Budget 2022 include:

- Encampment Response Coordination and Best Practice: Funding to protect the health and safety
  of people in encampments through supports such as site management and engagement; food;
  storage of personal items; cultural supports and ceremony; access to washrooms and showers;
  and transition to housing. Development of an Encampment Resource Guide for communities.
- Homelessness Community Action Grants Program: Grants of up to \$50,000 for community partners to address local needs, try new programs, and build local knowledge and capacity. New funding builds on the successful \$6-million program launched in 2019. (See Appendix D Profiles of Community Grants in Action).
- Welcome Home Kits: Non-profit providers will supply kits to people moving from homelessness into more stable housing.
- Community Inclusion Project: Resources developed through input from nearly 100 people with lived experience of homelessness to help promote social inclusion and reduce stigma and misperceptions around homelessness.
- Staffing Support for Non-Profit Partners: Helping non-profit service providers to increase safety and reduce workload for staff to meet the complex needs of clients.

#### Phase One/Two actions through Budget 2023 include:

 Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART): Regional multidisciplinary teams for rapid response to encampments, based on the award-winning model used in Greater Victoria and a Seattle project featured in the New York Times.

**Long-term vision:** Build stronger partnerships across all sectors through collaborative projects and new funding and programs that build capacity and expertise at the local level. These partnerships will identify and deliver local responses and promote belonging and inclusion for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

## 3. Ensure programming and service delivery includes input from people with distinct needs and perspectives:

#### Phase One actions through Budget 2022 include:

- Indigenous Advisory Committee: Through a request-for-proposal process convene a broad group of Indigenous people representing urban, rural, and intersectional perspectives to provide an inclusive and distinctions-based Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) lens on homelessness responses, program design, and delivery.
- Lived Experience Steering Committee: Through a request-for-proposal process convene a diverse forum of people with lived experience of homelessness to advise on the implementation of the Homelessness Plan.
- Youth Transitions: A plan to proactively house youth transitioning to adulthood from government
  care to reduce their likelihood of experiencing homelessness, developed in collaboration with
  youth and community partners, and including financial support, earnings exemption, help with
  the cost of housing, improved access to transition workers, enhanced life skills and mental-health
  programs, and better medical benefits until age 27. This includes rent supplements to help
  prevent homelessness.

#### Phase One/Two actions through Budget 2023 include:

 Encampment Strategy Coordination: To reduce and prevent homelessness encampments, the Province will improve coordination across agencies, including First Nations and Indigenous communities as well as community partners. Encampment responses include complex land management, social and legal coordination issues, as well as emergency response planning. Additional investments will ensure improved and more timely responses.

**Long-term vision:** Include diverse voices in the early creation of program design and delivery to better address the intersecting needs, rights, circumstances, and barriers faced by people experiencing homelessness.

4. Apply better data on drivers and impacts of homelessness to improve policy and program design and development.

#### Phase One actions through Budget 2022 include:

- Provincial Homeless Count: Conduct a third count across 20 communities in 2023 to deepen our
  understanding of who is homeless, how they are living, and what has shifted over time. Funding
  will allow us to coordinate both surveys and methods with the Federal Government and other
  communities to ensure data integrity across the province.
- Preventing and Reducing Homelessness Integrated Data Project: Analyze government data sets
  to establish homelessness numbers by year, month, and through a cohort model to measure
  impact. This new, innovative data project will provide a clearer understanding of who is homeless
  in B.C. and how people move in and out of homelessness.
- Women and Homelessness Research Project: New research on women's homelessness will enable better support for women, since current data collection methods generally undercount and misrepresent women's experiences of homelessness.
- Monitoring and evaluating: Development of a Performance Measurement and Evaluation framework for the Homelessness Plan for understanding, tracking and measuring progress on addressing homelessness.

**Long-term vision:** Use evidence, including data, research, wise practices, and the experiences of people with lived/living experience of homelessness in the development of policies and programs, and to determine how programs and policies change and affect lives. Align data principles with new antiracism legislation and human rights approaches.

#### **Measuring impacts**

To help establish baseline data and ensure ongoing accountability, we will track the actions and impacts of multiple ministries against the Plan's three goals. Examples include (but are not limited to):

#### **Prevention:**

- Reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time, particularly from communities that are overrepresented in the homeless population
- Increasing the number of affordable and supportive housing units
- Reducing the number of people discharged from health and correctional facilities to homelessness
- Reducing the number of new income assistance clients with no fixed address

#### **Immediate Response:**

- Reducing the number and size of large, complex encampments
- Reducing police/justice interactions with people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Reducing harm/death for those experiencing homelessness and in encampments
- Increasing Indigenous housing and supports options
- Increasing system capacity and readiness for warm weather encampment response
- Increasing the number of complex care housing spaces for adults with complex mental health and substance use needs

#### **Stability and Community Integration:**

- Reducing chronic homelessness
- · Increasing connections to income supports and community-based navigators
- Increasing health supports to those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Reducing drug toxicity deaths related to unstable housing and homelessness
- Reporting back to PWLE on performance measures and impacts, and course correcting based on iterative feedback

#### We commit to:

- Measuring outputs: e.g., the number of people supported, housed
- Measuring distinct impacts: e.g., the reduction of Indigenous homelessness
- Reporting on social impacts, personal journeys
- Developing a Performance Measurement Framework and reporting on progress annually

#### **Next Phases**

Planning and implementation for Phase One and Two of the *Belonging in BC* Homelessness Plan are underway through Budget 2022 and Budget 2023 with a focus on immediate response and serving people with distinct and intersecting needs. The Plan is intended to be iterative, inclusive and responsive, building from best practices and learnings. As such, Phase Three of the Plan, which focuses on systems transformation, will be developed with ministry, community and Indigenous partners based on impacts, successes and addressing gaps from the first two phases. This will be achieved through ministry working groups, implementation tables, the Indigenous and Persons with Lived Experience advisory roles and ongoing engagement.

#### **Building on Investments and Best Practices**

The *Belonging in BC* Homelessness Plan builds on a foundation of government actions and investments in the homeless-prevention sector since 2017.

**2018:** We recognized that housing stability and supply is key to reducing homelessness in B.C. and committed a historic \$7-billion over 10 years, working with partners to deliver 114,000 affordable homes, in the *Homes for BC: A 30-Point Plan*. More than 35,000 homes are already completed or underway throughout the province. Nearly 15,000 homes are open and close to 11,000 are under construction with many others in the development approvals or initiation stages.

**2019:** A year later, we took significant steps to address the poverty and mental health and addiction challenges that are inextricably linked to homelessness. We launched B.C.'s first-ever poverty reduction strategy – Together BC – to reduce overall poverty in B.C. by 25% and child poverty by 50% by 2024 (which includes making housing more affordable as a priority action item). Pathway to Hope – an ambitious roadmap for improving mental health and addictions care in B.C., was also released in 2019.

**2020:** When the COVID-19 pandemic hit amidst toxic drug and housing crises, we moved quickly to support the most vulnerable, providing supportive housing and emergency shelters, responding to encampments, and implementing rent protection measures.

More than **3,000 spaces** were opened for people from encampments and others in need. This included people living in unsafe, dense encampments at Oppenheimer Park in Vancouver and Topaz Park and Pandora Avenue in Victoria.

More than 4,700 people facing homelessness have moved into new supportive housing units the Province has opened in 30-plus communities across B.C. since 2017

Nearly **2,300 supportive homes** are also underway in B.C., including more than 700 homes coming to Vancouver and more than 250 in Victoria. Youth in government care were also supported to stay in their homes past their 19th birthday through temporary housing agreements.

As part of our efforts to ensure people most in need of support had access to safe, secure housing during the pandemic, government invested over \$376 million to purchase 27 hotel and motel properties in 12 communities across the province. Combined, these properties provide 1,575 homes for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Over the long term, many of these sites will be redeveloped into affordable rental housing for people in these communities.

**2021:** BC Housing funded more than 2,700 temporary shelter spaces and approximately 580 extreme weather response shelter spaces throughout the province.

The number of total emergency shelters spaces increased from 1,500 temporary spaces and 290 extreme weather response spaces in 2020. This was in addition to the more than 1,800 permanent shelters that are open year-round.

**2022:** In January 2022, Government announced the first-of-its-kind **complex care housing** for British Columbians that need a level of support that goes beyond what is currently available in supportive housing. Complex care housing is a ground-breaking approach to provide enhanced supports that address the needs of people with overlapping mental health, substance use, trauma and acquired brain injuries who are often left to experience homelessness or are at risk of eviction.

Through Budget 2022, the Province invested nearly \$35 million over three years to improve supports for young people from care transitioning to adulthood. This includes a \$600-a-month rent supplement to assist young adults with the cost of private rental housing and new Youth Transition Support Workers who will support youth in care starting at age 14 in accessing services until they are 25, among other supports.

Government investments in other priority areas will also have significant impacts on improving the lives of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These include:

- Continued support for the Pathway to Hope mental health and addictions strategy
- \$3 million over three years to provide welcome home kits to people moving from homelessness into more stable housing
- Climate-related disaster response funding

- Additional \$166 million over the fiscal plan to bring government's annual housing investments to \$1.2 billion by 2024/25, including \$100 million in 2022/23 to non-profit housing providers to accelerate the construction of mixed-income housing
- The Strengthening Communities' Services program provides \$100 million in funding to help B.C. communities address the impacts of homelessness, support people and strengthen community health and safety. The program which is a part of the Safe Restart Agreement funded equally by the Province and the Government of Canada is being administered by the Union of B.C. Municipalities
- The Peer Employment Program provided \$8 million annually in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to support over 1,000 vulnerable people at risk of, and experiencing homelessness, to gain life/work skills, employment wrap around services and supports. Funding was provided through the Canada-BC Workforce Development Agreement, administered by the Ministry of Postsecondary Education and Future Skills
- Work to develop a provincial food security framework that will support population groups most likely to experience food insecurity, co-led by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and Ministry of Agriculture
- Increasing capacity at the Residential Tenancy Branch to add up to 50 new staff to cut wait times and doubling the Compliance Enforcement Branch to support renters, landlords and prevent housing loss

The *Belonging in BC* Homelessness Plan lays out our path to reduce and prevent homelessness across the Province with clear goals and a suite of immediate actions over the next three years. Building partnerships and collaboration during this first implementation phase is crucial to the success of the Plan, and to future phases. Ongoing engagement with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous communities, service providers and organizations serving Indigenous peoples and those with distinct needs and lived experience will help determine this path. We will learn from each other, from our progress and from robust data collection. Together, we can reach our goal to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time, and to support communities in creating a home, and a place, for everyone to belong.

# Appendix A: Homelessness Plan Actions and Funding

BUDGET 2022 - \$633 MILLION OVER 3 YEARS	PHASE 1
Transform Systems	Timeline
Complex Care Housing: \$164 million over 3 years to expand the Complex Care housing model to at least 20 more sites, with plans to support up to 500 people. – <i>Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions</i>	In progress, ongoing
Permanent Housing Plan: \$264 million over three years to invest in a permanent housing plan for the 3,000 people who were temporarily housed in leased or purchased hotels and other spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. – BC Housing	In progress, ongoing
Homelessness Supports: \$170 million to increase health supports, housing access, social inclusion and system navigation in the Homelessness Plan that build and expand over time; including a new program wraparound support rent supplement program to help 3,000 people access market housing by 2024/25 and the Integrated Support Framework. – <i>Ministry of Health and Ministry of Housing</i>	Early 2023
Staffing Support for Non-Profit Partners: \$7-million to build capacity and supports. – <i>BC Housing</i>	In progress, ongoing
Expansion of Community Integration Specialist Services: Utilizing existing resources to further expand the role of community-based income and social supports, and navigating government services. – <i>Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction</i>	In progress, ongoing
New minimum shelter rate for people receiving income assistance or disability assistance helps people experiencing homelessness with incidental expenses. Clarified policy that people experiencing homelessness are eligible for some moving expenses. – <i>Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction</i>	Implemented, ongoing
Strong Partnerships	
Encampment Supports: \$4 million for encampment supports, including site management, engagement, and support for food, sanitation, storage, and the safety of people in the encampments and as they move to indoor spaces.  – BC Housing	In progress, ongoing
Homelessness Community Action Grants: \$6-million to extend this successful program through SPARC BC, providing community and Indigenous organizations, First Nations, and Local Governments with funding for projects addressing homelessness and to build capacity. – <i>Ministry of Housing</i>	In progress, ongoing

to homelessness. – <i>Ministry of Housing</i> BUDGET 2023 - \$4.9 BILLION OVER 10 YEARS  1. Transform Systems  Complex Care Housing: \$520 million in funding for 240 additional purpose-built Complex Care Housing units at approximately 12 locations across the province to support people with more complex mental health and addictions challenges. These units provide supports to those experiencing overlapping mental health challenges, developmental disabilities, substance abuse issues, trauma, and/or acquired brain injuries. – <i>Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions</i> Housing with Integrated Supports: 3,800 additional supportive housing units for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.	PHASE 1 & 2  Timeline  More info to come  More info to come
BUDGET 2023 - \$4.9 BILLION OVER 10 YEARS  1. Transform Systems  Complex Care Housing: \$520 million in funding for 240 additional purpose-built Complex Care Housing units at approximately 12 locations across the province to support people with more complex mental health and addictions challenges. These units provide supports to those experiencing overlapping mental health challenges, developmental disabilities, substance abuse issues, trauma, and/or	Timeline  More info to
to homelessness. – Ministry of Housing  BUDGET 2023 - \$4.9 BILLION OVER 10 YEARS	
to homelessness. – Ministry of Housing	PHASE 1 & 2
Evaluation Framework: \$3 million to support development and implementation of a Performance Measurement and Evaluation Framework for the Homelessness Plan to understand, track and measure program on preventing and responding	More info to come
Women and Homelessness Research Project: \$100,000 for a research project on the intersections of women and homelessness. – <i>Ministry of Housing</i>	Spring 2023
Provincial Homeless Count: \$1.6 million to facilitate the 2023 Homeless Count. – <i>Ministry of Housing through BC Housing</i>	Spring 2023
Strengthen Data and Evidence Informed Policy	
Indigenous Advisory Committee: \$150,000 to facilitate Indigenous engagement and collaboration in policy and programs. – <i>Ministry of Housing</i>	Spring 2023
People with Lived Experience Committee: \$150,000 to facilitate the inclusion of people with lived expertise of homelessness and supporting organizations to participate in policy and programs. – <i>Ministry of Housing</i>	Summer 2023
Youth Transitions Housing: \$35 million for youth transitioning from care, including a new financial supplement, rent supplements, and improved supports and benefits until age 27. – <i>Ministry of Children and Family Development</i>	In progress
Inclusive Programs and Service Delivery	
Welcome Home Kits: \$3 million over three years for non-profit providers to supply kits to people moving from homelessness into more stable housing.  – Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction	In progress
	Spring 2023
Community Inclusion Project: \$50,000 to complete anti-stigma resources for the public, media and government organizations based on stories from people with lived experiences of homelessness. – <i>Ministry of Housing</i>	Spring 2023

Homelessness Supports: \$1.7 billion to increase health supports, housing access, social inclusion and system navigation in the Homelessness Plan that build and expand over time; the Integrated Support Framework. – <i>Ministry of Housing and Ministry of Health</i>	More info to come
Immediate Shelter & Supports: Homeless Encampment Action Response for Temporary Housing (HEARTH) includes \$218 million in funding for emergency housing, shelter options and immediate coordinated supports to assist people in encampments or sheltering in public spaces. – <i>Ministry of Housing, BC Housing</i>	2023
Additional \$7.5 million in funding for the successful BC Rent Bank program, through which 18 rent banks across the province help people with low-incomes maintain and access rental housing, preventing homelessness and evictions.  – Ministry of Housing	Spring 2023
2. Strong Partnerships	
Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART): Regional multidisciplinary teams for rapid response to encampments, based on the award-winning model used in Greater Victoria and a Seattle project featured in the New York Times. – BC Housing	Summer & Fall 2023
3. Inclusive Programs and Service Delivery	
Encampment Strategy Coordination: To reduce and prevent homelessness encampments, the Province will improve coordination across agencies, including First Nations and Indigenous communities as well as community partners. Encampment responses include complex land management, social and legal coordination issues, as well as emergency response planning. Additional investments will ensure improved and more timely responses.	Fall 2023
4. Strengthen Data and Evidence Informed Policy	
Initiatives to support strengthened data and evidence informed policy continue	More info to
through funding provided in Budget 2022.	come

## **Appendix B: Integrated Support Framework**

The Integrated Support Framework (ISF) is a model, or system, of health, social, cultural, and housing supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness across settings from encampments and shelters to supported housing, complex care and private market rentals with supports. The ISF provides a vision for an approach to providing wraparound supports and making it easier for people to access and navigate supports and services. Supports provided using the ISF will be delivered through partnerships and strive to be accessible, culturally safe, gender- and healing-informed and incorporate supports that meet peoples' unique and intersecting needs.

Who will the ISF benefit? The ISF will make it easier for people to access and navigate supports and services. It provides a framework for the provision of supports that serve people experiencing homelessness or those with precarious housing, including:

- People experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including those sheltering outdoors, residing in
  encampments, in emergency shelters, or living in SROs, supportive recovery houses, congregate
  supportive housing or leaving correctional or treatment facilities with no return address who are
  moving amongst temporary housing situations
- People with social and community support needs
- 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals experiencing homelessness
- · Youth experiencing homelessness, seniors and women and children leaving violence
- Indigenous people, who are overrepresented in homeless populations and face systemic and interpersonal discrimination accessing supports, housing and resources
- People from marginalized/racialized communities who are overrepresented in homeless populations and face systemic and interpersonal discrimination accessing supports, housing and resources
- People with disabilities, including physical, long-term health, end-of-life, mental health and cognitive issues, brain injury and severe allergies, who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and who have moderate support needs

#### What Principles Guide the ISF?

- Housing first approach
- · Healing-informed, culturally diverse, culturally safe and person-centered care
- Harm reduction approach
- Client-centred, collaborative
- Preservation of dignity, personal agency
- Family and community centred
- Gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) principles to create an atmosphere of safety and respect for diverse populations
- Prioritize people with distinct needs Indigenous, Métis, Inuit, First Nations, urban, rural, racialized and immigrant populations, youth, seniors, women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people with disabilities
- Flexibility and adaptability for local health/housing partnership solutions

#### How will the ISF be delivered and implemented?

The ISF is intended to be a guiding document and model of support to best serve a person's specific needs. Implementation of the model will take time and this ISF is a step in that process, providing a vision for what a coordinated system of supports should be by guiding program, policy and investment planning. It will be used as a tool to tailor supports to individuals and settings, and to better evaluate support programs. The ISF will be delivered by the identified partners in the Framework, and potentially others. Not all people receiving services under the homelessness plan will require each service described under the ISF, as some services may already be accessible in community. The ISF model will be implemented over time, as services and models come online, and will build on best practices.

#### WHAT IS THE INTEGRATED SUPPORT FRAMEWORK?



Wraparound Supports	Settings	Modality	Partners
<ul> <li>System navigation &amp; Coordinated Case Management</li> <li>Physical Health, Mental Wellness and Substance Use supports</li> <li>Housing supports</li> <li>Indigenous Cultural supports</li> <li>Social, Emotional &amp; Community Supports</li> <li>Personal Care &amp; Personal Living Supports</li> <li>Food Security Supports</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Outdoors, in encampments</li> <li>Shelters</li> <li>Congregate housing – supportive, single-room occupancy hotels (SROs)</li> <li>Transitional housing</li> <li>Market housing with rent supplements</li> <li>Community-based, e.g., Friendship Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, community care clinics</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Co-located/onsite programming &amp; activities</li> <li>Mobile in-reach</li> <li>Outreach</li> <li>Community, e.g., Friendship Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, community care clinics</li> <li>Virtual/telephone supports</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>PWLE</li> <li>Health Authorities</li> <li>BC Housing</li> <li>Local governments</li> <li>Indigenous governing bodies</li> <li>Indigenous organizations</li> <li>Non-profit housing providers</li> <li>Community organizations</li> <li>Landlords</li> <li>Police</li> </ul>



- A model, or system, of health, social, cultural, and housing supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness across settings from encampments and shelters to supported housing, complex care and private market rentals with supports
- ISF supports will be delivered through partnerships and strive to be accessible, culturally safe, gender – and healing – informed and incorporate supports that meet peoples' unique and intersecting needs

## Appendix C: Profiles of Impact and Indigenous Innovation

#### **Culturally Aligned Integrated Support Framework - Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness**

The first phase of the new Supported Rent Supplement Program applies the principles of the Integrated Support Framework and includes an innovative Indigenous-led model.

The Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) serves First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous peoples on Vancouver Island, grounding its work in traditional principles, the voices of the Indigenous street community, evidence-based design and research.

ACEH has developed a dual-model of housing care that provides culturally supportive housing with decolonized harm reduction that successfully serves Indigenous people in various housing forms throughout Greater Victoria.

ACEH will now apply its model to the Cultural Aligned Integrated Support Framework rent supplement program, providing up to \$600/month rent supplements with wraparound health, cultural, emotional, social and housing supports in partnership with ministries. The new program will begin in Greater Victoria in early 2023 and expand across the Island, in partnership with Indigenous communities.

#### **Homelessness Community Action Grants**

Budget 2022 funded an additional \$6-million in the successful Homelessness Community Action Grant Program. Delivered through the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C. (SPARC BC), this \$12-million total in grants will help communities and organizations to build understanding and capacity in homelessness responses and prevention. This program is designed to support local action and knowledge about homelessness and its causes, increase public awareness and respond to gaps in services for people experiencing homelessness.

In 2019, the Province provided \$6 million to establish the grant program and more than 182 community-based research projects have been completed to date. Each of these projects tell an important story about the community, collaboration and distinct needs. These projects are a model for communities across the Province to learn from and be inspired by. For a full list of projects and grants, visit: sparc.bc.ca

#### **Success Stories**

#### Hupačasath First Nation partners to build housing pods homes and community

The Hupačasath First Nation is using the Homelessness Community Action Grant program to build unique pod homes and community supports for members at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This includes a 'housing pod' pilot program. The project has participation of the City of Port Alberni and BC Housing, through donation of land and resources. Construction of the pods will be assisted by community members who will reside in them, allowing for a feeling of ownership over the spaces and participation in the community.

"The community members who will live in [the pods] are going to build them. They'll have a sense of ownership when they come in and have the key in their hand. It's a dry warm place to sleep – it's a basic human right, having a dry warm place to sleep," said Chief Councillor Brandy Lauder, Hupačasath First Nation. "It comes down to our core values of who we are as the Hupačasath First Nation. We all had a dry warm place to sleep, a sense of belonging."

The pods will create a welcoming place for community members to find a sense of home and belonging and gain new skills and developing knowledge around construction. Further initiatives include partnering with the Port Alberni Native Friendship Centre and other organizations to explore the health, service, and support needs of unhoused community members. This project will seek to understand current needs, identify gaps, and identify new pathways for creating community and social inclusion.

## Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness centres inclusion and language in the Unsettling Stigma Project

"If you label people, that's where they stay. All you want is to feel human again." – Unsettling Stigma Project Participant

The Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society (ACEH) set out to hear directly from First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples with lived experience of homelessness about the impacts of stigmatizing language on their lives and solutions to unsettle it. One hundred and ten voices were centred as part of this project and from these voices, important learnings emerged. Resoundingly, the ACEH heard that terms commonly used including "hard-to-house," "chronically homeless," and "street-entrenched," are harmful as they convey personal blame and a sense of unwelcome permanency. Cited longer term impacts of stigmatizing language include mental health decline and avoidance of services. With a focus on solutions, many shared recommendations for how we can change the conversation around Indigenous homelessness to promote respect and dignity. Preference was expressed by participants for the use of person-first, community-centred, strength-based language like "Street Family" and "Unhoused Community," for the reason that they increase feelings of belonging. Participants also recommended addressing stigma in our services and supports through increased peer involvement, strengthening education about colonialism, shifting our narrative at the systems-level, and through listening to personal stories about Indigenous homelessness. The Unsettling Stigma Project provides concrete ways that government, organizations, and the public can actively help reduce stigma and contribute to create safer communities for Indigenous peoples at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

#### Peer-based Surrey organizations partner to include lived experience, build skills and inclusion

Lookout Housing and Health Society and the Diverse Organization Providing Education and Regional Services (D.O.P.E.R.S.) partnered to conduct peer-led research project and survey to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experience of homelessness to better inform future program development. The project also has identified opportunities to leverage peer knowledge and helped to create space to share the stories and insights of over 100 participants.

"I was both an interviewer and interviewee. Being a part of this work has been awesome and painful. I learned new skills and how to conduct interviews, how to connect with people. Participating made me feel like I was worthy again; that we are finally being heard actually listened to. It felt like I mattered; that people finally are seeing me. That I matter. Thank you for helping me remember that I live here to; that I am someone," said participant Ken N.

## Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society engages LGBTQ2S+ youth in Comox Valley on housing and supports

Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society is a non-profit, residential housing program in the Comox Valley and provides people and families with access to housing that helps prevent homelessness. Though the grant program, Dawn to Dawn is conducting a community-based research project which engages LGBTQ2S+ youth about the feasibility, design and implementation of a new housing project. The project, called Rainbow House, will provide specialized supports for LGBTQ2S+youth aged 16 to 28. The knowledge from the research project is essential as very few LGBTQ2S+ youth seek refuge in the shelter system as they report discriminations and feeling more vulnerable and unsafe in shelters. This initiative will aid the development of targeted strategies that help youth with housing and support needs and help develop specialized housing where they are able to feel safe and comfortable.

"Social justice is an integral part to understanding the plight of the unhoused. The funding providing by SPARC provided Dawn to Dawn to allow the stories of the unhoused to further this understanding," said Grant Shilling, Community Facilitator, Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society.

#### Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George uses Community Voicemail Project to stay connected

The Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George Community Voice Mail (CVM) Program provides front-line workers from a variety of non-profit organizations, housing providers employment agencies and other organizations help to connect those living in poverty, experiencing homeless or who may have multiple barriers. This free service allows participants to have a stable phone number which can be accessed 24 hours a day and removes the barrier for many to obtain a phone contract or to add money to a pay-as-you-go phone inhibit one's right to communication. The program promotes consistent, ready access and connection to services, workers, and family; it is a valuable tool for participants to reach their goals including accessing mental health or substance use services, finding employment, or accessing housing. It helps organizations to stay connected to the people they serve, and ensures individuals have information they need about health, housing, shelter, and employment events and services. AHS PG is conducting community-based research into the outcomes of the program, as well as training participating organizations, and building awareness.

It is nice to be a part of a program that offers a hand up. It is joyous to see the shocked look in one's face when they learn the program is free. We at Aboriginal Housing Society are grateful to be involved in this initiative," says Hawa Ayorech, Community Programs Coordinator, Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George.

"Leaving a number one can be reached at, is a requirement for housing applications. A CVM number offers anonymity and has been used successfully to help tenants obtain housing. The story does not end there, one of the persons who obtained housing is a young mom who had lost her children due to unsuitable accommodations. Through our weekly broadcasts this lady had learned of our Wellbriety groups. Having a support team helped her with her sobriety. Four months later she was reunited with her young children. Today her children are back in school. She has remained committed to her sobriety, is in counselling and recently started a job."

#### A Way Home Kamloops Society brings together diverse youth voices

A Way Home Kamloops Society undertook a project to engage the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (BCCEYH) in the development of a B.C. made Provincial plan for addressing youth homelessness. Key activities included co-ordination and organization of five "think tanks" that engaged homeless youth with lived experience to identify potential gaps in the current system of services and supports for vulnerable and at-risk youth, along with the organization of a youth-led homelessness conference.

"Through this project, diverse youth voices will be brought together in a meaningful way while investing in their futures and youth homelessness prevention. By providing the opportunity to learn critical employment and skills development, these young leaders can further grow, form connections with likeminded peers, and find a deeper sense of belonging and purpose in their journeys. An opportunity such as this gives tremendous hope and the means to co-create a better world, one where youth with lived expertise can take stage and light the way towards change for future generations to come," said Kira Cheeseborough, Project Coordinator, A Way Home Kamloops Society.

#### Senior Services Society sets up collaborative to promote inclusion, housing stability

The Senior Services Society established a Seniors Housing Collaborative to help vulnerable and low-income seniors in Metro Vancouver with access to affordable housing and supports through the grant program and other funding. Seniors with lived experience act as advisors to promote diversity, inclusivity, and intergenerational connection. The project has allowed the society to work with a housing innovation consultant, in addition to enacting knowledge mobilization, the creation of quarterly podcasts, and the development and publication of a list of recommendations to aid seniors.

"The Seniors Housing Collaborative was established to shift policy and practice so low-income seniors can age in the right place with appropriate services and strong networks. Membership includes 20+ people, including housing and service providers, municipal representatives, and eight seniors with diverse perspectives on the rental landscape. We are engaging other speakers to continue our work to draft policy briefs and nurture partnerships for change," says Alison Silgardo, CEO, Senior Services Society of BC.



# MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING

Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams/
Homeless Encampment Action Response & Temporary Housing
HEART/HEARTH

#### 1.0 Parties

Between:

The Ministry of Housing (The Ministry) And The Corporation of the City of Victoria (The City)

#### 2.0 Preamble

Homelessness in British Columbia is a pressing issue affected by housing affordability, mental health and addiction as well as the toxic drug crisis. The Province of BC introduced Belonging in BC: a collaborative plan to prevent and reduce homelessness ("Belonging in BC") in Spring 2023.

Belonging in BC involves coordination among multiple Ministries, all levels of government, Indigenous partners, communities, and organizations, as well as people with lived experience. Belonging in BC focuses on immediate and long-term actions emphasizing a housing first model with person-centered approaches. Collaboration with local and Indigenous partners is critical to prioritizing cultural supports and the health and safety of individuals to receive rapid integrated services. This is key to helping people stabilize and better access suitable shelter and housing options. To do this, Belonging in BC includes actions to address homelessness and encampments such as the Homelessness Encampment Action Response Teams/Housing (HEART/HEARTH).

## 3.0 Homelessness Encampment Action Response Teams/ Housing (HEART/HEARTH)

Homeless Encampment Actions Response Teams (HEART): This is a locally based, multidisciplinary outreach model that is developed and coordinated by community partners and supported by BC Housing. HEART brings together Ministry partners, local government representation (e.g. bylaw, engineering), law enforcement representation, Health Authorities, non-profit, and Indigenous peoples to quickly assess the needs of people sheltering in encampments and to provide rapid access to supports and services people need to exit homelessness; successes of community-based models include rapid rehousing, family reunification, and reduction in police interactions.

Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH): This is a new fund administered via BC Housing, to provide for emergency housing, shelter options, and immediate coordinated supports to assist people in encampments or sheltering in public spaces to come inside, and access temporary or permanent housing options that fit their needs.

#### 4.0 Purpose

This MOU has been developed to recognize the parties' shared purpose of supporting people in encampments and the unsheltered through commitment to implement HEART and HEARTH, a coordinated approach to resolution of encampments that prevents entrenchment, improves health and safety, preserves dignity for homeless encampment residents, respects the need for culturally appropriate services for Indigenous peoples, and considers the needs of the surrounding community.

- The objectives of the MOU are to:
- Clarify the roles of the key parties leading the implementation of HEART and HEARTH,
- Ministry of Housing, BC Housing, and the City.
- Confirm the shared commitment to work collaboratively within respective areas of jurisdiction to reduce or eliminate the conditions which give rise to encampments, including through the creation of shelters, temporary and/or permanent housing.
- Confirm the shared commitment to work collaboratively within respective areas of jurisdiction to provide unhoused people with access to health, sanitation including washrooms and shower facilities, food, cultural, and social support services.
- Confirm the shared commitment to uphold person-centred, dignified, and culturally safe responses, by engaging and collaborating with Indigenous partners.
- Confirm the shared commitment to engagement and collaboration with

- community partners, and to engage with persons with lived experiences of homelessness.
- Confirm the shared commitment to preserving and enhancing the safety, security, and well-being of all members of the entire community.
- Recognize the role of the Province of BC in providing support for housing, healthcare including mental health and addictions care, and the corresponding role of local governments, including the City, in supporting the fulfillment of that mandate by the Province of BC.

#### 5.0 Partner Commitments

#### The Ministry's role will include:

- Collaborate with the City to plan, coordinate and provide:
  - Outreach services to individuals experiencing homelessness;
  - Data and information collection;
  - Shelter and housing development;
  - o Transition planning; and
  - Temporary supports for people experiencing homelessness
- Improve access to a range of supports through cross-Ministry coordination, including health, sanitation, income, harm reduction, fire safety, social and cultural supports.
- Through BC Housing, provide unhoused people with access to health and sanitation services, including washrooms and shower facilities; food and drinking water; cultural and social support services; and services to promote safety and security.
- Through BC Housing, provide oversight and support in the development of shelter spaces, temporary and permanent housing options.

- Through BC Housing, lead operational planning and supports for temporary support services, transitions from encampments to temporary or permanent housing through coordinated access, selection of operators, and as a partner in other service coordination.
- Engage with local First Nations and Indigenous communities to understand their perspectives, needs, and desired role in addressing homelessness and encampment(s) in the City by:
  - Providing information and seeking Indigenous worldviews;
  - Facilitating the provision of culturally safe services and cultural supports, including providing for roles in both HEART and HEARTH specific to Indigenous peoples;
  - Providing support for responses led by Indigenous partners; and
  - Assisting Indigenous communities in coordinating supports for community members that are homeless or in encampments, including resources for people to return to home communities if that is their self-determined goal.
- Recognize the role of the City to identify priorities and make decisions pertaining to sheltering locations, community safety, application of its bylaws and protection of public and private property, while at the same time ensuring that actions taken are done so in the spirit of collaboration with the Ministry and other stakeholders.

#### The City will:

 Identify appropriate and feasible land/space for HEARTH shelter and/or temporary and permanent housing, and work with the Ministry and BC Housing to expedite land use decisions necessary for rapid provision of shelter and housing.

- Facilitate maintenance of land designated for temporary sheltering, including garbage bin pick up and water utility connections.
- Support the work of the Ministry and BC Housing to provide unhoused people with access to health services; sanitation services, including washrooms and shower facilities; food and drinking water; cultural and social support services; and services to promote safety and security.
- Participate in HEART, including supporting connections and participation of bylaw and law enforcement and fire services, and sharing information with the Ministry, BC housing and, when appropriate, local partners, regarding planned or considered enforcement actions pertaining to encampments.
- Work with the Ministry, BC Housing and other partners to align local approaches with the Provincial approach that resolution of encampments is best achieved through provision by the Ministry, through BC Housing, of housing, supports, and services that meet people's distinct needs.
- Engage with local Indigenous communities and organizations to understand their perspectives and needs related to homelessness and housing.
- Ensure ongoing engagement and collaboration with community partners and engagement with persons with lived experiences of homelessness.
- Apply its bylaws in a person-centred, dignified, and culturally safe manner with a goal of preventing entrenchment of encampments and ensuring the safety and well-being of both housed and unhoused residents.

#### Parties will:

- Engage with Indigenous organizations to develop culturally safe and supportive practices and responses and facilitate access to cultural services and supports for unhoused Indigenous peoples.
- . Work with community organizations to leverage existing strengths and structures.
- Recognize that the health and safety of people experiencing homelessness is enhanced through providing and maintaining access to healthcare and lifesaving services.

#### **6.0 Partner Commitments in Public Communication**

All partners will strive to coordinate communications on actions relating to encampments and homelessness, including supported relocation efforts.

## 7.0 Partner Roles in Preventing and Responding to Future Encampments

#### The Ministry:

- To implement a Provincial Encampment Response Framework in communities that outlines the Provincial process, approach, jurisdictional context and learnings; as well as a toolkit for local governments and communities to utilize in encampment responses – developed in partnership across governments and with Indigenous and community partners.
- To lead cross-ministry and coordinated responses to homeless encampments on crown and other lands through the rapid provision of outreach and increased access to supports.
- The Ministry, along with BC Housing, will continue to work to develop a robust and diverse housing ecosystem with supports to prevent homelessness, that will enable shelters to be a bridge to supportive housing and ensure people in temporary supportive housing through HEARTH have permanent housing options available to them that meets their needs.

 Continue to implement the commitments of Belonging in BC, including working across ministries to ensure provincial actions and initiatives to address and prevent homelessness are coordinated and integrated.

#### The City:

- To support the work of the Ministry, through BC Housing, to continue to work to create diverse housing options, including identifying available land and buildings for housing and shelter and to expedite land use decisions necessary to rapidly respond to housing need.
- To prioritize the approval and establishment of temporary and permanent supportive housing and

- shelters, as well as the participation in emergency shelter programs.
- To work with BC Housing to identify and consider municipal levers, such as tax exemptions, zoning, and bylaws, to expedite social housing units and affordable housing in alignment with BC Housing's funding programs and the community's housing needs.
- Proactively apply its bylaws to prevent entrenchment of encampments and ensure the safety and well-being of both housed and unhoused residents.

#### 8.0 No Legal Obligations

This MOU is not legally binding and places no legal obligations on the Ministry or the Local Government.

Minister Ravi Kahlon Minister of Housing



Mayor Marianne Alto
Mayor of Victoria



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### The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and metaanalysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes



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Health
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#### ABSTRACT

Background: The health benefits of greenspaces have demanded the attention of policymakers since the 1800s. Although much evidence suggests greenspace exposure is beneficial for health, there exists no systematic review and meta-analysis to synthesise and quantify the impact of greenspace on a wide range of health outcomes. Objective: To quantify evidence of the impact of greenspace on a wide range of health outcomes.

Methods: We searched five online databases and reference lists up to January 2017. Studies satisfying a priori eligibility criteria were evaluated independently by two authors.

Results: We included 103 observational and 40 interventional studies investigating  $\sim$ 100 health outcomes. Meta-analysis results showed increased greenspace exposure was associated with decreased salivary cortisol -0.05 (95% CI -0.07, -0.04), heart rate -2.57 (95% CI -4.30, -0.83), diastolic blood pressure -1.97 (95% CI -3.45, -0.19), HDL cholesterol -0.03 (95% CI -0.05, <0.01), low frequency heart rate variability (HRV) -0.06 (95% CI -0.08, -0.03) and increased high frequency HRV 91.87 (95% CI 50.92, 132.82), as well as decreased risk of preterm birth 0.87 (95% CI 0.80, 0.94), type II diabetes 0.72 (95% CI 0.61, 0.85), all-cause mortality 0.69 (95% CI 0.55, 0.87), small size for gestational age 0.81 (95% CI 0.76, 0.86), cardiovascular mortality 0.84 (95% CI 0.76, 0.93), and an increased incidence of good self-reported health 1.12 (95% CI 1.05, 1.19). Incidence of stroke, hypertension, dyslipidaemia, asthma, and coronary heart disease were reduced. For several non-pooled health outcomes, between 66.7% and 100% of studies showed health-denoting associations with increased greenspace exposure including neurological and cancer-related outcomes, and respiratory mortality.

Conclusions: Greenspace exposure is associated with numerous health benefits in intervention and observational studies. These results are indicative of a beneficial influence of greenspace on a wide range of health outcomes. However several meta-analyses results are limited by poor study quality and high levels of heterogeneity. Green prescriptions involving greenspace use may have substantial benefits. Our findings should encourage practitioners and policymakers to give due regard to how they can create, maintain, and improve existing accessible greenspaces in deprived areas. Furthermore the development of strategies and interventions for the utilisation of such greenspaces by those who stand to benefit the most.

#### 1. Introduction

The idea that greenspaces are beneficial for the health of the population became a generally accepted principle as early as the 1800s, when various London-based organisations including the Commons Preservation Society and the National Health Society called for the preservation, creation, and accessibility of open spaces and parks within crowded residential areas, referring to them as the "lungs" of the town or city (Hickman, 2013). More recent Healthy City guidelines from the WHO support this view, defining a healthy city as "one that continually creates and improves its physical and social environments

and expands the community resources that enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and developing to their maximum potential" (World Health Organisation, 2016a). However, increasing urbanicity and modern lifestyles can mean that opportunities for human contact with nature become less frequent.

The term greenspace is typically defined as open, undeveloped land with natural vegetation (Centres for Disease Control, 2013), although it also exists in many other forms such as urban parks and public open spaces as well as street trees and greenery. Recognition of the health benefits of greenspace exposure was one of the motivations of Oxford General Practitioner William Bird MBE in establishing the UK's first

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health walk scheme at his practice in 1995, leading to the foundation of the English Walking for Health programme (WfH) (Walking for Health, 2016). Collaborations between health care providers and local nature partnerships are becoming increasingly common across the UK (Bloomfield, 2014; Kent Nature Partnership, 2014; Naturally Healthy Cambridgeshire, 2016; West of England Nature Partnership, 2016) and further afield (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2016), and aim to better capitalise on ways the health of the natural environment is intrinsically linked to human health, striving for "healthy communities in healthy environments" (Naturally Healthy Cambridgeshire, 2016). Yet a challenge is to ensure those who might benefit the most have sufficient opportunities for exposure to greenspace.

Socioeconomic health inequalities have consistently commanded the attention of researchers and policymakers, with evidence that inequalities are currently increasing (Townsend et al., 1982). Environmental factors form one of the many potential explanations as to their cause (World Health Organisation, 2016b). Research has shown that low income neighbourhoods have reduced greenspace availability (Thomas Astell-Burt et al., 2014a, 2014b), and residents of more deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to use those greenspaces that exist (Jones et al., 2009). Park quality and frequency of park use have both been found to be higher amongst high-socioeconomic status (SES) residents (Leslie et al., 2010). It should also be noted that living in a greener neighbourhood has been linked with stronger greenspacehealth associations (Fuertes et al., 2014; McEachan et al., 2015; Mitchell and Popham, 2007) and that income-related health inequalities have been shown to be lower in greener neighbourhoods (Mitchell and Popham, 2008). Greenspace may currently be overlooked as a resource for health and as part of a multi-component approach to decrease health inequalities.

Several hypotheses have been suggested to explain the relationship between nature and health and well-being. The first, is that natural and green areas promote health due to the opportunities for physical activity that they present. The health benefits of physical activity are well understood, with literature suggesting that exercising in a green environment may be more salutogenic than exercising in an indoor gym environment (Thompson Coon JB et al., 2011). Secondly, public greenspaces have been associated with social interaction, which can contribute towards improved well-being (Maas et al., 2009). Thirdly, exposure to sunlight, which is thought to counteract seasonal affective disorder (Rosenthal et al., 1984) and a source of vitamin D (van der Wielen RdG et al., 1995) has been suggested as a causative pathway for this relationship. A fourth is the "Old friends" hypothesis, which proposes that use of greenspace increases exposure to a range of microorganisms, including bacteria, protozoa and helminths, which are abundant in nature and may be important for the development of the immune system and for regulation of inflammatory responses (Rook, 2013). Further potential mechanisms include the cooling influence of bodies of greenspace on surface radiating temperature (SRT), which has been documented as beneficial for health (Shin and Lee, 2005), as well as the mitigation of greenspace against environmental hazards such as air (Dadvand et al., 2012a; Yang et al., 2005) and noise pollution (De Ridder et al., 2004; Wolch et al., 2014).

Whilst there is a growing body of literature attempting to quantify the links between nature and improved health and well-being, systematic reviews in this area have largely focused on the association between greenspace and a specific health outcome or behaviour such as mortality (Gascon et al., 2016; van den Berg et al., 2015), obesity (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011), birth weight (Dzhambov et al., 2014), physical wellbeing (Thompson Coon JB et al., 2011) as well as the acute health benefits of short term exposure to greenspace (Bowler et al., 2010). Associations have been reported with improved perceived general health, perceived mental health, as well as linking quality of neighbourhood greenness with improved general health (van den Berg et al., 2015). Physical activity in a natural outdoor environment has been associated with reduced negative emotions and fatigue, increased

energy (Bowler et al., 2010; Thompson Coon JB et al., 2011), improved attention, as well as greater satisfaction, enjoyment and a greater intent to repeat the activity (Bowler et al., 2010). Additionally, meta-analyses have shown increased residential greenspace to be significantly associated with reduced cardiovascular and all-cause mortality (Gascon et al., 2016), and increased birth weight (Dzhambov et al., 2014). Yet no systematic review has attempted to determine the impact of greenspace on a wide range of health outcomes.

With this systematic review, we aim to address a major gap in the evidence by identifying a set of health outcomes that have been investigated as being potentially associated with exposure to greenspace. Health outcome terms were taken from the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10), a medical classification list produced by the World Health Organisation (World Health Organisation, 2015), with greenspace terms taken from a previous systematic review (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011). The clarification of the magnitude of associations facilitates the investigation of potential underlying mechanisms in the relationship between nature and health. Furthermore, clinicians may use these findings to make recommendations to patients, which may convey health benefits or assist in tackling socio-economic health inequalities.

#### 2. Methods

This systematic review followed Cochrane systematic review guidelines (Deeks et al., 2011), requirements of the NHS National Institute of Health Research Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (PROSPERO, 2015) and the PRISMA statement for reporting studies that evaluate healthcare interventions (Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009). Methods of the analysis and inclusion criteria were specified in advance and documented in a protocol registered as CRD42015025193 (PROSPERO, 2015) available on the PROSPERO database http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/.

#### 2.1. Data sources

We searched electronic databases including MEDLINE (US National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.), EMBASE (Reed Elsevier PLC, Amsterdam, Netherlands), AMED (Wolters Kluwer, Leicestershire, UK), CINAHL (EBSCO Publishing, Massachusetts, U.S.) and PsycINFO (American Psychological Association, Washington D.C., U.S.) from inception to the end of September 2015, using specific search terms. The search was then updated to include studies published until mid-January 2017. Databases were selected to best represent source material in health, allied health and human science. Additionally, reference lists from included studies and previous systematic reviews on greenspace and health were hand searched.

#### 2.2. Search strategy

Search terms associated with greenspace were developed with reference to a previous systematic review on greenspace and obesity (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011). For this review, we defined 'greenspace' as open, undeveloped land with natural vegetation as well as urban greenspaces, which included urban parks and street greenery. Health outcomes were taken from ICD-10 and then expanded to include the relevant metrics, for example "diabetes" was expanded to include "blood glucose" and glycated haemoglobin, commonly referred to as "HbA1c." To limit the scope of work, mental health and communicable diseases were excluded from this review due to the volume of literature after including them in initial scoping searches. Outcomes associated with weight status and birth weight were also excluded, as systematic reviews investigating them have recently been published (Dzhambov et al., 2014; Lachowycz and Jones, 2011; Thompson Coon JB et al., 2011).

The search strategy identified studies that contained at least one

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Table 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria for this review are:	Exclusion criteria
Empirical studies testing the relationships between greenspace and physical health outcomes	Studies that do not look at empirical evidence.
Studies that use human participants.	Studies that do not use human participants.
The study reports a physical health outcome other than BMI/physical activity/mental health/communicable disease/birth weight.  Papers and documents written in English.	Studies where BMI/mental health/communicable disease/birth weight are the only outcome(s) or the study does not report a health outcome.  Papers and documents not written in English.

keyword or Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) from each list of search terms. The search was piloted to ensure known studies were identified and search syntax terms were adapted to suit each database. The electronic database search terms are detailed in the online supplementary table S2 (Appendix A). The search strategy also incorporated limits to studies conducted on humans and studies written in English.

#### 2.3. Study selection

All empirical studies where the outcome could be directly attributable to greenspace were included, including both intervention and observational studies. Titles and abstracts were examined by the primary reviewer (CB) to assess eligibility for the review using PICO criteria:

- Participants: Male and female, no age restrictions
- Intervention: Exposure to greenspace
- Comparators: There is no comparator restriction
- Outcomes: Any health outcome

Further details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria can be found in Table 1, below.

Reviewer (CB) initially screened titles and abstracts to remove obviously irrelevant articles, and then two reviewers screened all full text articles independently (CB & AJ) to identify studies for inclusion in the systematic review. Discrepancies were resolved by discussion. Frequently abstracts used terms such as "neighbourhood environment", "built environment" or "neighbourhood facilities" and did not specify the definition of these terms or if greenspace was investigated. These studies were retrieved as full texts and screened for greenspace as an outcome to ensure that none were excluded erroneously.

#### 2.4. Data extraction

A data extraction sheet was developed by both authors to record the study type, population, type of greenspace under investigation, greenspace measurement tool used, health outcome under investigation and the outcomes. This was piloted on four manuscripts and refined accordingly. Data was extracted into a coding frame using Microsoft Excel, synthesised and tabulated. All studies underwent methodological critical appraisal using one of two checklists. For intervention studies, we used a risk of bias tool employed by Hanson and Jones (Hanson and Jones, 2015) and Ogilvie et al. (Ogilvie et al., 2007), (Table 3) which was adapted for purpose. For observational studies the Lachowycz and Jones (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011) quality checklist (Table 2) was adapted and used. Publication bias across studies within the meta-analysis was tested with funnel plots using SE as the measure of study size on the vertical axis and mean difference on the horizontal.

#### 2.5. Narrative synthesis and meta-synthesis

Following critical review of each study, a narrative synthesis was compiled. In order to be considered for meta-analysis, authors needed to present either 1) mean difference, standard deviation (SD) and sample size for both the highest and lowest greenspace categories, or 2)

number of cases of the reported condition/disease as well as sample size for both highest and lowest greenspace categories. If the required data was not reported in the paper, authors were contacted for this information. In total, 92 authors were contacted of which 32 responded with the data required for meta-analysis. In order for a specific health outcome to be considered for meta-analysis data from a minimum of two studies was required. Where data was given for different subgroups, each was input separately and combined in meta-analyses using the RevMan software package. All results are presented as forest plots with 95% confidence intervals. The I2 statistic was calculated to quantify the degree of heterogeneity between studies (Higgins et al., 2003). A rough guide to interpreting heterogeneity is provided in the Cochrane handbook and gives I2 values of 30-60% to represent moderate heterogeneity and values of 50-90% to represent substantial heterogeneity (Deeks et al., 2011). In cases of high heterogeneity, the known heterogeneity was assessed (i.e. populations, study design, exposure etc) to ensure that a meta-analysis was appropriate. A random effects model was employed for all meta-analyses as it is considered to represent a more conservative approach, suitable for cases of high heterogeneity (Higgins and Green, 2011).

Sensitivity analysis was then undertaken, which included studies which only scored 9 or above (out of a total of 11) in either the risk of bias tool or quality appraisal checklist, meaning that all but 2 risk of bias/quality checklist criteria had been met.

#### 3. Results

The initial database search yielded 10,430 studies, of which 8986 were removed as duplicates or as clearly irrelevant after reviewing titles. A further 6 studies were retrieved from reference lists of review articles. The abstracts of 1444 studies were screened and any that did not provide enough information were retrieved for full text examination. A total of 247 papers were read as full texts to be assessed for eligibility. After independent assessment by the second reviewer (AJ), 143 studies met the inclusion criteria and were eligible to be included in the synthesis. The review flow chart is detailed in Fig. 1. The characteristics and synthesised results for all 143 papers are detailed in supplementary table S1 (Appendix A).

#### 3.1. Study characteristics

Although there was no date restriction on the search, 96% of the articles were studies from the past 10 years, illustrating recent growth in interest in greenspace and health, with no papers prior to 1984 meeting the inclusion criteria. Studies were in 20 different countries. Although 50% of studies were in Europe, the country with the highest frequency of included studies was Japan with 24. The populations under investigation varied greatly in size, with the smallest an intervention study of 9 participants (Ochiai et al., 2015), the largest study using primary data collection presented results for 2593 primary schoolchildren (Dadvand et al., 2015), and the largest study using routinely collected data used 2011 UK census data with a population of > 63 million (Wheeler et al., 2015). In some papers, the number of participants was not reported.

Eleven different types of greenspace exposure were measured, the

**Table 2**Adapted Lachowycz and Jones quality appraisal checklist for observational studies.

Item Methodological quality	Description	Scale
1. Population - Selection bias	Are the individuals selected to participate in the study likely to be representative of the target population?	Likely to be representative     Unlikely to be representative     N: Insufficiently described
2. Population –Inclusion bias	Is there evidence of bias in the percentage of selected individuals who provided data for inclusion in the analysis?	No evidence of bias     Evidence of bias     N: Insufficiently described
3. Outcome measure	Was the outcome objectively measured or self- reported?	Objectively measured outcome     Self reported     N: Insufficiently described
4. Green space measure - derivation	Was derivation of the green space variable well described?	Derivation of green space measure well described     Derivation of green space measure not well described
5. Green space measure - type	Did the green space measure include information on type of green space?	Green space measure included information on type of green space     Green space measure did not include information on type of green space     N: Insufficiently described
6. Use of green space	Use of green space was measured and included in analysis	1: Measured use of green space 0: Did not measure use of green space N: Insufficiently described
7. Statistical methodology	Was an appropriate statistical methodology used?	Evidence of appropriate methodology     No evidence of appropriate methodology     N: Insufficiently described
8. Effect size	Was an effect size reported for green space variable?	Effect size reported for green space     Effect size not reported for green space     N: Insufficiently described
9. Multiplicity	Was green space the main exposure being measured or one of many variables being tested?	T: Green space variable main exposure     Green space variable one of many variables being tested     N: Insufficiently described
10. Level of analysis	Was analysis of green space in relation to outcome carried out at individual level or at ecological (area) level	1: Individual level 0: Ecological level N: Insufficiently described
11. Green space measure	Was greenspace exposure objectively measured or self-reported?	1: Objectively measured 0: Self-reported N: Insufficiently described

most common of which was neighbourhood greenspace (including residential greenspace, street greenery and tree canopy) measured by 56 studies, followed by greenspace-based interventions and proximity to a large greenspace. Several randomised studies compared a known green environment (i.e. a park or forest) with an urban or indoor environment. One study examined whether viewing trees through a hospital window had any association with post-operative recovery time when compared with a window view of a wall with no trees (Ulrich, 1984). One included study investigated both green and blue (water) space (Burkart et al., 2016). Studies investigating blue space alone with no investigation of greenspace exposure were excluded at the full text screening stage. A variety of greenspace measurement tools were used, including Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CeH) land cover map, and tree canopy and street tree data, as well as subjective measures of greenness such as selfreported quality of neighbourhood greenspace and self-reported frequency of walking in a green area.

Within the 143 studies, 40 were interventional and the remainder observational. Out of the 40 interventional studies, 27 were investigating the association between shinrin-yoku and various health outcomes. Shinrin yoku, or "forest bathing" is a popular practice in Japan and neighbouring countries, and is defined as "taking in the atmosphere of the forest" (Park et al., 2010). It is said to have health-promoting properties and to reduce stress (Park et al., 2010). Participants of shinrin-yoku spend time in the forest either sitting or lying down, or walking through the forest. In studies investigating forest bathing, a control group carried out the same activity in an urban environment. These studies typically had small numbers of participants (between 9 and 280 participants).

Of the 103 observational studies, 35 were cohort studies and 69

cross-sectional, including 18 large scale ecological studies investigating environmental influences on health amongst the population using census data. Almost 100 health outcomes were investigated, with most manuscripts investigating more than one outcome. The most frequently investigated health outcomes were cardiovascular, including cardiovascular mortality, blood pressure, heart rate and incidence of angina and myocardial infarction. Other commonly reported health outcomes included pregnancy outcomes, self-reported health, mortality (all-cause, respiratory and intentional self-harm), and diabetes, as well as various blood biomarkers. The individual health outcomes investigated by each study are detailed in the table of study characteristics, supplementary table S1 (Appendix A).

#### 3.2. Study quality

All 143 articles were assessed for quality using adapted versions of the Lachowycz and Jones checklist (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011) for observational studies (Table 2) and the Hanson and Jones and Ogilvie et al. risk of bias tool (Hanson and Jones, 2015; Ogilvie et al., 2007) for interventional studies (Table 3). No study was excluded due to a low quality score. Assessments of quality were initially made by the first reviewer (CB) and then all studies were cross-checked by one other (AJ, SH or EC) for discrepancies.

An inter-rater reliability analysis using the  $\kappa$  statistic was performed and found  $\kappa$  0.937, p<0.001 representing substantial agreement. Full consensus was reached after discussion. In the case that a checklist item consistently brought up discrepancies, clarification of the definition of the item was discussed. Individual quality analysis scores can be found in the supplementary tables S5 (observational studies) and S6 (intervention studies) (Appendix B).

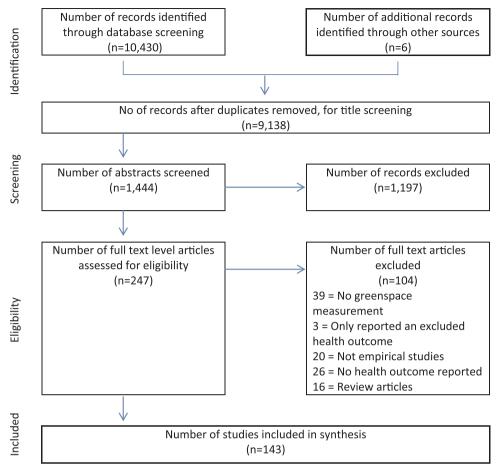


Fig. 1. Flow chart of studies.

**Table 3**Adapted Hanson and Jones and Ogilvie et al. risk of bias tool for intervention studies.

Item Methodological quality	Description	Scale
1. Reporting: hypothesis	Is the hypothesis/aim/objective of the study clearly described?	1: Yes – clearly described 0: No
2. Reporting: outcome(s)	Are the main outcomes to be measured clearly described in the introduction or methods section? (if the main outcomes are first mentioned in the results section, this question should be answered no)	1: Yes – clearly described in introduction/methods 0: No – not clearly described/first mentioned in results
3. Reporting: intervention	Are the interventions of interest (greenspace and control or otherwise) clearly described?	1: Yes – clearly described 0: No
4. Randomisation	Was there sufficient description of a randomisation process or statistical test to show that comparability between the two groups has been adjusted for (no explanation scores zero)?	Yes – description of a randomisation process     No – no explanation
5. Exposure	Did the authors show that there was no evidence of a concurrent intervention which could have influenced the results (no explanation scores zero)?	1: Yes 0: No – no explanation N: Insufficiently described
6. Representativeness	Were the study samples shown to be representative of the study population?	1: Yes – shown to be representative 0: No – shown not to be representative N: Insufficiently described
7. Comparability	Were baseline characteristics of the intervention comparable with the control or were potential confounders at baseline approximately adjusted for in analysis?	1: Yes 0: No N: Insufficiently described
8. Attrition	Were numbers of participants at follow-up identifiable as at least 80% of the baseline?	1: Yes 0: No N: Insufficiently described
9. Outcome assessment: tools	Were valid and reliable tools used to assess participant outcomes?	1: Yes 0: No N: Insufficiently described
10. Follow-up time scale	Was the length of time to follow up assessment appropriate for the intervention?	1: Yes 0: No
11. Precision of the results	Were confidence intervals or p-values given?	1: Yes 0: No

For the 103 observational studies assessed using the Lachowycz and Jones checklist (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011) detailed in Table 2, scores ranged from 4 (one study) to 11 (one study), out of a total of 11 criteria. Only 12.6% of studies scored  $\leq$  7, with 39.8% of studies scoring 9 out of 11. The two checklist criteria which were the most recurrently missing from were "5. Did the green space measure include information on type of greenspace?" and "6. Use of greenspace was measured and included in the analysis".

For the 40 interventional studies assessed using the Hanson and Jones and Ogilvie et al. risk of bias tool (Hanson and Jones, 2015; Ogilvie et al., 2007) detailed in Table 3, scores ranged from 5 (one study) to 11 (one study) out of a total of 11 criteria. Only 7.7% of studies scored  $\leq 7$ , with 66.7% of studies scoring 9 out of 11. The two checklist criteria which were the most recurrently missing from studies were "5. Did the authors show that there was no evidence of a concurrent intervention which could have influenced the results?" and "6. Were the study samples shown to be representative of the study population?"

#### 3.3. Meta-analysis

When extracting information from papers for meta-analysis, 'high' and 'low' greenspace exposure was defined based on the highest and lowest exposure categories provided in each paper. These were typically the highest or lowest quartile or quintile of exposure." Commonly reported outcome measures enabled meta-analysis of 24 health outcomes, summarised in Table 4 and presented in full in supplementary Figs. S2-S25 (Appendix B). Statistically significant health denoting associations between high versus low greenspace exposure groups were identified for self-reported health, type II diabetes (Fig. 2), all-cause and cardiovascular mortality, diastolic blood pressure (Fig. 3), salivary cortisol, heart rate, heart rate variability (HRV), and HDL cholesterol as well as preterm birth and small size for gestational age births. Reductions were also found for incidence of stroke, hypertension, dyslipidaemia, asthma, and coronary heart disease, as well as improvements in systolic blood pressure, fasting blood glucose, and gestational age. However these results were not statistically significant.

Zero heterogeneity was reported for 8 of the analyses, 6 reported moderate heterogeneity (30–60%) with 9 having substantial heterogeneity (> 60%). This suggests substantial heterogeneity between studies for heart rate, diastolic and systolic blood pressure, self-reported health, preterm birth, diabetes, all-cause mortality, small size for gestational age, hypertension and asthma. The I² score for the good self-reported health meta-analysis was 100%, indicating very high levels of inconsistency between studies. Using funnel plots, all studies were identified as visually symmetrical with a narrow spread at the top of the funnel indicating precision with results close to the pooled estimate and without bias towards smaller studies. Supplementary Fig. S1 (Appendix B) shows an example funnel plot.

To test whether significant meta-analysis results were due to

inclusion of poor quality studies, sensitivity analysis was conducted where possible. Meta-analysis was repeated with only studies that scored  $\geq 9$  in either the quality appraisal checklist or risk of bias tool. This was only possible for heart rate, which showed a stronger effect size -3.46 (95% CI -4.05, -2.88) (2 studies removed), systolic blood pressure, which decreased in effect size and remained statistically non-significant -0.49 (95% CI -1.20, 0.22) (2 studies removed), and self-reported good health, which decreased in effect size and lost significance 1.06 (95% CI 0.96, 1.18) (6 studies removed). Table 6 shows the results from this sensitivity analysis. Fasting blood glucose, cholesterol, HbA1c, asthma, and triglycerides meta-analyses were not possible to include as there was only one remaining high quality study. The remaining meta-analyses consisted only of studies scoring  $\geq 9$ , and so sensitivity analysis was not possible.

#### 3.4. Non-pooled health outcomes

Meta-analysis was not possible for a number of health outcomes including cancer, respiratory mortality, neurological outcomes, and various biomarkers, as no two studies presented results on comparable outcomes. Three studies reported on cancer outcomes and found that living in the highest quartile of greenspace was associated with a significantly reduced risk of prostate cancer (Demoury et al., 2017), OR 0.82 (95% CI 0.72, 0.92), as well as reduced incidence of overall cancer mortality HR 0.87 (95% CI 0.78, 0.97) (James et al., 2016), whilst an Australian study found a significant increased risk of skin cancer for participants living in the highest greenspace quartile OR 1.07 (95% CI 1.01, 1.14) Astell-Burt et al., 2014a, 2014b). One study found living in the highest quartile of greenspace to be associated with reduced incidence of respiratory mortality (James et al., 2016) HR 0.66 (95% CI 0.52, 0.84). In terms of neurological outcomes, one study found that living in a neighbourhood with a low % of greenspace was associated with deficits in motor development in children (Kabisch et al., 2016), whilst another found no association between greenspace and cognitive development (Ward et al., 2016). A number of studies investigated a variety of biomarkers including natural killer cells (Kim et al., 2015), Creactive protein (Mao et al., 2012b), and perforin (Jia et al., 2016). Individual study results can be found in the table of study characteristics, supplementary table S1 (Appendix A).

#### 4. Discussion

This systematic review and meta-analysis of 143 studies provides evidence that exposure to greenspace is associated with wide-ranging health benefits. Meta-analyses results have shown statistically significant health-denoting associations for salivary cortisol -0.06 (95% CI -0.07, -0.04), heart rate -3.47 (95% CI -4.04, -2.90), diastolic blood pressure -1.97 (95% CI -3.45, -0.49), HDL cholesterol -0.03 (95% CI -0.05, <-0.01), and significant improvements in the HF

Table 4
Summary meta-analysis results table: mean difference (MD) between highest and lowest greenspace exposure groups.

Outcome N (participants)		Effect MD (95% CI)	Heterogeneity I <sup>2</sup>	P-value	
Salivary cortisol	7 (954)	- 0.05 (-0.07, -0.04)	0%	P < 0.001	
Heart rate	10 (1058)	<i>− 2.57 (−4.30, −0.83)</i>	78%	P0.004	
HDL cholesterol	2 (3474)	-0.03 (-0.05, < -0.01)	0%	p = 0.02	
Diastolic blood pressure	12 (9695)	<i>− 1.97 (−3.45, −0.49)</i>	82%	p = 0.009	
Systolic blood pressure	13 (9791)	- 1.50 (-3.43, 0.44)	78%	p = 0.13	
Change in HF power of HRV	7 (826)	91.87 (50.92, 132.82))	49%	p < 0.001	
LF/(LF+HF)	6 (266)	-0.06 (-0.08, -0.03)	0%	p < 0.001	
HbA1c	2 (174)	- 0.77 (-1.86, 0.32)	54%	P = 0.16	
Fasting blood glucose	2 (3474)	-0.01 (-0.08, 0.07)	0%	p = 0.84	
Total cholesterol	2 (3474)	0.03 (-0,05, 0.10)	0%	p = 0.48	
LDL cholesterol	2 (3474)	0.04 (-0.03, 0.11)	0%	p = 0.23	
Triglycerides	2 (3474)	0.06 (-0.01, 0.12)	0%	p = 0.07	
Gestational age	3 (22911)	< -0.01 (-0.05, 0.05)	0%	P = 0.94	

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Table 5
Summary meta-analysis results table: odds ratios of disease incidence difference between high and low greenspace areas.

Outcome	N (participants)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	Heterogeneity I <sup>2</sup>	P-value
Good self-reported health	10 (41873103)	1.12 (1.05, 1.19)	100%	p < 0.001
Preterm birth	6 (1593471)	0.87 (0.80, 0.94)	68%	p < 0.001
Type II diabetes	6 (463220)	0.72 (0.61, 0.85)	73%	p < 0.001
All-cause mortality	4 (4001035)	0.69 (0.55, 0.87)	96%	P = 0.002
Hypertension	4 (11228)	0.99 (0.81, 1.20)	62%	P = 0.91
Small for gestational age	4 (1576253)	0.81 (0.76, 0.86)	65%	p < 0.001
Cardiovascular mortality	2 (3999943)	0.84 (0.76, 0.93)	54%	p < 0.001
Stroke	3 (256727)	0.82 (0.61, 1.11)	59%	P = 0.20
Dyslipidaemia	2 (5934)	0.94 (0.75, 1.17)	57%	P = 0.56
Asthma	2 (2878)	0.93 (0.57, 1.52)	68%	P = 0.78
Coronary heart disease	2 (255905)	0.92 (0.78, 1.07)	48%	P = 0.26

power 91.87 (95% CI 50.92, 132.82) and LF/(LF+HF) -0.06 (95% CI -0.08, -0.03) of heart rate variability. As well as statistically significant reductions in the incidences of type II diabetes 0.72 (95% CI 0.61, 0.85), all-cause mortality 0.69 (95% CI 0.55, 0.87), cardiovascular mortality 0.84 (95% CI 0.76, 0.93), as well as pregnancy outcomes preterm birth 0.87 (95% CI 0.80, 0.94), and small size for gestational age 0.81 (95% CI 0.76, 0.86). A significant increase in incidence of reporting good health was also found 1.12 (95% CI 1.05, 1.19). Some of the meta-analyses results had high levels of heterogeneity (Tables 4, 5), and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Included studies investigating non-pooled health outcomes also reported salutogenic associations for health outcomes such as cancer outcomes, respiratory mortality, sleep duration, various biomarkers, and neurological outcomes.

This review has comprehensively sought out empirically-reported studies investigating the association between greenspace and a wide range of health outcomes across five databases, covering a large number of relevant international journals. It has extensively analysed 143 different studies with the combined population size of > 290 million. It has also extracted information for 24 novel meta-analyses to provide evidence of health benefits. A further major strength of this review is its inclusivity; studies were not excluded based on study design or type of greenspace, and as a result a broad range of greenspace exposures and health outcomes were identified by the 143 included studies. However, the inclusivity of this study can also be viewed as a limitation due to high heterogeneity across studies, and difficulties in comparing results from small-scale intervention studies and much larger ecological cross-sectional studies or in comparing studies that used objective measurements of greenspace with those that did not.

A number of studies reported stronger associations between green-space exposure and self-reported health, birth outcomes and morbidity for those from low socioeconomic status (SES) groups and the most deprived areas (Agay-Shay et al., 2014; Dadvand et al., 2012b; Mitchell and Popham, 2008; Roe et al., 2016). Similar stronger associations were reported for birth outcomes and self-reported health for those with < 10 years in education. Increased neighbourhood greenness was also reported to decrease the effect of income deprivation on both all cause and cardiovascular mortality by one study (Mitchell and Popham,

2008). However results by SES group were only presented by a small number of studies so it was not possible to conduct a formal subgroup analysis, or to determine if this was the case for other health outcomes. Greenspaces may form part of the arsenal for combatting health inequalities, and our findings should encourage practitioners and policymakers to give due regard to how they can create, maintain and improve existing accessible greenspaces in deprived areas. Furthermore, the development of strategies and interventions for the utilisation of such greenspaces by those of low SES status who stand to benefit the most is needed.

Whilst previous systematic reviews have examined the relationship between greenspace and specific health outcomes or behaviours, this review investigated the potential impact of greenspace on a broad range of health outcomes. Our findings are consistent with previous systematic review results that suggest that greenspace is beneficial for health. Lachowycz and Jones (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011) found that 68% of papers included in their systematic review found a positive or weak association between greenspace and obesity-related health indicators, although findings were inconsistent and mixed. Thompson Coon et al. investigated the association between exercising in outdoor natural areas and health, and found physical activity in natural environments to be associated with increased energy, improved mental wellbeing and higher levels of intent in repeating the activity at a later date (Thompson Coon JB et al., 2011). However, consistent with our systematic review, poor methodological quality of the available evidence and the heterogeneity of outcome measures hamper the interpretation and extrapolation of these findings (Thompson Coon JB et al., 2011). Bowler et al. looked at studies comparing measurements of health in outdoor natural and synthetic environments such as indoor or outdoor built environments (Bowler et al., 2010). Findings suggest that a walk or run in a natural environment may convey greater health benefits than the same activity in a synthetic environment. This is consistent with the findings of Hanson and Jones, who conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis on outdoor walking groups (Hanson and Jones, 2015). Outdoor walking groups were found to significantly improve systolic and diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, body fat percentage, BMI, cholesterol, V02 max, depression and physical functioning, with no adverse side effects reported (Hanson and

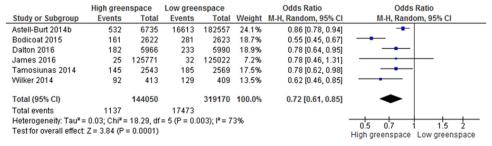


Fig. 2. Meta-analysis of the effects of greenspace exposure on incidence of type II diabetes.

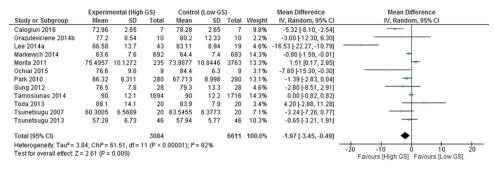


Fig. 3. Meta-analysis of the effects of greenspace exposure on diastolic blood pressure.

Table 6
Summary results table of sensitivity analysis meta-analysis consisting of only studies which scored ≥9 in quality checklist or risk of bias tool.

Outcome	N (participants)	Effect MD or odds ratio (95% CI)	Heterogeneity I <sup>2</sup>	P-value
Heart rate	8 (842)	- 3.46 (-4.05, -2.88)	83%	P < 0.00001
Systolic blood pressure	11 (9681)	- 0.49 (-1.20, 0.22)	79%	p = 0.17
Good self-reported health	4 (6577)	1.06 (0.96, 1.18)	88%	P = 0.26

Jones, 2015). As with Bowler's systematic review and our findings, the evidence suggests that walking in a greenspace or natural area may offer health benefits above walking in an urban environment or on a treadmill (Bowler et al., 2010). Putting aside the health benefits of physical activity, which have been widely documented (Bize et al., 2007; Janssen and LeBlanc, 2010; Lawlor and Hopker, 2001; Penedo and Dahn, 2005; Warburton et al., 2006), the associations between greenspace and health found in this study suggests that "green exercise" may have additional health benefits. In combination with the findings of our systematic review, it can be seen that there is a convincing body of evidence to suggest that greenspace is beneficial for health, and also that greenspace may be currently undervalued as a resource for health. Studies consistently reported that there are several substantial gaps in knowledge remaining in this field, most commonly the mechanisms underlying the relationship between greenspace and health.

A high proportion of studies included in meta-analyses investigated Shinrin-yoku or forest-based interventions. Although 27 studies investigated the association between forest-based environments and health, only 5 looked at levels of street trees and tree canopy, with mixed results. It remains to be seen if the health benefits associated with forest bathing can be replicated in an urban environment by increasing street greenery and urban greenspace. Research in this field may inform national guidelines on the recommended number of trees necessary in urban and deprived areas to convey health benefits to the local populations.

A strength of this review is that all papers underwent rigorous critical appraisal using one of two carefully chosen tools; the Lachowycz and Jones checklist (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011) for observational studies and the Hanson and Jones and Ogilvie et al. risk of bias tool (Hanson and Jones, 2015; Ogilvie et al., 2007) for intervention studies. Both tools were tailored for the purposes of this review and every study underwent quality appraisal by two reviewers, with a high level of inter-rater agreement. However, 58.3% of the observational studies and 77% of the interventional studies scored ≥9 out of 11 in their respective quality appraisal tools. This limited heterogeneity in study quality may suggest that the tools may not have been sensitive enough to capture certain aspects of quality of the studies reviewed and differentiate between studies. Sensitivity analysis was conducted using only high quality studies (studies scoring  $\geq 9$ ). This cut-off point was chosen priori to balance the need to retain some studies with a need to understand how sensitive the results were to the inclusion of weaker studies. A limitation of this cut off point is that it implied that all quality appraisal criteria were of equal value, which may not be the case. Results remained consistent for heart rate and systolic blood pressure,

however self-reported good health had a reduced effect size and lost statistical significance, with the drop in statistical significance being possibly explained by the lower power of this sub-analysis. Furthermore, the self-reported good health meta-analysis had an  $\rm I^2$  of 100%, indicating a high risk of statistical heterogeneity. This result should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

A limitation of this review is that the search was restricted to manuscripts published in the English language. Furthermore, several health outcomes were only investigated in one or two studies, limiting comparability of results, for example, for respiratory mortality and various cancers. There were many differences between study populations; for example the largest and smallest study populations were > 63 million (Wheeler et al., 2015) and 9 participants (Ochiai et al., 2015) respectively. The exclusion of mental health and communicable disease outcomes, whilst done pragmatically, is also a limitation of this review.

One key area for further research is how health professionals and policymakers might encourage patients to increase their exposure or even time spent in green spaces, and in particular to target those from lower SES areas. A number of included studies in this review reported a stronger relationship between greenspace and health outcomes for participants who were from low SES neighbourhoods, had lowest education levels, or those who were from areas with the lowest surrounding neighbourhood greenness. However, results were often not presented according to SES, meaning that formal subgroup analysis by SES level was not possible. Therefore it is not known if this may be the case for other health outcomes. Evidence has shown increased odds of higher psychosocial distress in residents of low SES areas (Kessler, 1982). Our meta-analysis results suggest that greenspace exposure may reduce salivary cortisol, a physiological marker of stress. Further studies investigating greenspace and heath but with a focus on SES groups and subsequent health inequalities are required to fill this gap in the literature.

From the quality appraisal, it was evident that there were two criteria recurrently missing from both observational and intervention studies. For the 103 studies assessed using the observational study quality checklist (Lachowycz and Jones, 2011) (Table 2), these were "5. Did the green space measure include information on type of greenspace?" and "6. Use of greenspace was measured and included in the analysis". For the 40 intervention studies assessed using the risk of bias tool (Hanson and Jones, 2015; Ogilvie et al., 2007) (Table 3), these were "5. Did the authors show that there was no evidence of a concurrent intervention which could have influenced the results?" and "6. Were the study samples shown to be representative of the study population?" Future research should take this into consideration, with observational studies aiming to include

data on type of greenspace under investigation and the participants' use of greenspace. Intervention studies should also aim to report on whether a concurrent intervention is in place, as well as commenting on the representativeness of the population.

Although this systematic review has uncovered a large body of research on the relationship between greenspace and health, there is a paucity of literature on the mechanisms underlying this relationship. Currently there are several suggested hypotheses. Greenspaces offer opportunities for physical activity, social cohesion, and stress reduction (Hartig et al., 2014), which each carry their own numerous health benefits. Exposure to the diverse variety of bacteria present in natural areas may convey immunoregulatory benefits and reduce inflammation (Rook, 2013). Much of the literature on forest bathing suggests that phytoncides (volatile organic compounds with antibacterial properties) released by trees may explain the salutogenic properties of shinrin yoku (Li et al., 2009; Tsunetsugu et al., 2010). Further research should build on the findings of this systematic review by hypothesising and testing the potential mechanisms underlying the relationship between greenspace and health. The associations between greenspace and mental health outcomes and communicable diseases, both outcomes that were not considered here, should also be explored further.

#### 5. Conclusions

This review suggests that greenspace exposure is associated with wide ranging health benefits, with meta-analyses results showing statistically significant associations with reduced diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, salivary cortisol, incidence of type II diabetes and stroke, all-cause and cardiovascular mortality, as well as health-denoting associations with pregnancy outcomes, HRV, and HDL cholesterol, and self-reported health. However some meta-analyses results are limited by poor study quality and high levels of heterogeneity and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Increased greenspace exposure was also associated with non-pooled outcomes including neurological outcomes, respiratory mortality, and increased sleep duration. The findings of this systematic review suggest that the creation, regeneration and maintenance of accessible greenspaces and street greenery may form part of a multi-faceted approach to improve a wide range of health outcomes.

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#### Contributors

CB and AJ designed the protocol and the search strategy which was executed by CB. CB screened the initial results and extracted data. CB led quality appraisal which was then cross-checked by AJ. CB drafted the original manuscript which was critically revised by AJ.

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#### Competing interests

The authors declare they have no actual or potential competing financial interests

#### Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2018.06.030.

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### The Economic Value of Health Benefits Associated with Urban **Park Investment**

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**Abstract:** The allocation of resources towards the development and enhancement of urban parks offers an effective strategy for promoting and improving the health and well-being of urban populations. Investments in urban parks can result in a multitude of health benefits. The increased usage of greenspace by park users has been linked to positive physical and mental health outcomes. Additionally, the expansion of greenspace in urban areas can mitigate harmful impacts from air pollutants, heat, noise, and climate-related health risks. While the health benefits attributed to urban parks and greenspaces are well documented, few studies have measured the economic value of these benefits. This study applied a novel ecohealth economic valuation framework to quantify and estimate the potential economic value of health benefits attributed to the development of a proposed park in the downtown core of Peterborough, Canada. The results indicated that development of the small urban park will result in annual benefits of CAD 133,000 per year, including CAD 109,877 in the avoided economic burden of physical inactivity, CAD 23,084 in health savings associated with improved mental health, and CAD 127 in health savings attributed to better air quality. When including the economic value of higher life satisfaction, the economic benefit is more than CAD 4 million per year. The study demonstrates the value of developing and enhancing urban parks as a strategy to improve population health and well-being, and as a means of cost savings to the medical system.

Keywords: greenspace; parks; urban; natural assets; well-being; nature; economic value; population health; greenbelt

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#### 1. Introduction

Urban parks offer opportunities for engagement with the natural environment, and provide ecosystem services that contribute to positive health outcomes. Such opportunities include play, physical exercise and athletic activities, relaxation, social interaction, and reprieve from urban noise and heat. In addition, ecosystem services and vegetation cover from parks mitigate air pollutants, reduce surface temperatures and the urban heat island effect, mitigate flooding, support biodiversity, and increase community resiliency to climate change [1–4]. Urban parks include forested and vegetated areas, playgrounds, recreational fields, community gardens, and urban squares. Park investments can include developing new parks or expanding parks, improving the quality of parks and amenities, or offering new programs and services. Park investments provide health benefits by increasing the number of park users, influencing how users engage with parks, and increasing the amount of greenspace within an urban area to reduce the negative impacts from air pollutants, heat, noise, and climate-related health risks. The health benefits result in economic savings associated with reduced burden of illness, decreased use of health services, and higher life satisfaction. The economic framework and case study application presented in this study connects investments in urban parks to improvements in health and well-being to show the health return on investment. Making these connections helps policy makers, public health officials, and urban planners better understand and communicate the health

value provided by urban parks in monetary terms. The results support program-, policy-, and planning-related decisions by complementing other factors and information under consideration. This study will be of interest to municipal policy makers, urban planners, parks departments, community health organizations, public health agencies, and sports and recreation groups, as the monetary value of health benefits provided by urban parks are typically omitted in the planning and budgeting process.

The identification of quantifiable health outcomes associated with urban parks is a complex task due to a multitude of factors. These include the variety of exposures to different types, doses, and qualities of the environment, as well as the presence of mediators and modifiers, which can obscure causal relationships [1,4–6]. Additionally, measuring long-term health outcomes poses further challenges. Despite these complexities, the evidence linking urban parks to health outcomes is strongest in three key areas. These include physical health improvements, such as higher levels of physical activity; mental health improvements associated with exposure to nature; and improvements in respiratory symptoms and cardiovascular disease linked to reduced exposure to air pollution.

Therefore, the application of the novel ecohealth economic framework emphasizes these three areas. Given the context of the study, the literature highlighted below focuses on the role of urban parks in facilitating higher levels of physical activity; supporting mental well-being; and improving air quality. For comprehensive reviews of the health benefits attributed to greenspace use and exposure, see [1,4,5,7,8].

#### 1.1. Higher Levels of Physical Activity

One of the most extensively researched links between urban park exposure and improved health and well-being outcomes is through increased physical activity [1,7,9–11]. Physical activity can protect against a range of diseases and adverse health outcomes, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression, osteoporosis, and premature death [12–15]. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies physical inactivity as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality [4]. In the context of urban parks and greenspaces, studies have consistently revealed a positive association between park exposure and increased physical activity, often determined by adherence to recommended physical activity guidelines [1,7,16–21]. Research conducted on North American urban parks indicates that the percentage of park users engaging in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) varies from 18% to 62% [22–24].

Factors influencing the intensity and frequency of park users engaging in physical activities include neighbourhood demographics, socio-economic conditions, park proximity, park size, park amenities, park programs, and perceived security [7]. Numerous studies have shown that proximity to parks and neighbourhoods with higher amounts of urban greenspace are positively associated with higher levels of engagement in physical activity [9–14]. A study by Villeneuve et al., examining recreational physical activities in Ottawa, Canada, based on neighbourhood greenness using a Google Street View greenness index, found that those living in areas scoring in the upper quartile on the index spent on average 5.4 more hours weekly on recreational physical activities relative to those in the lowest quartile [15]. The presence of park amenities and park programming influence how people use parks, including the type of activity, activity duration, and activity intensity [13,16–18]. In a study of 33 parks in Ontario, Canada, Kaczynski et al. found that a greater number of both facilities (e.g., paths, trails, playgrounds, and basketball courts) and amenities (e.g., bike racks, historical or educational features, shelters, restrooms, and drinking fountains) were significantly associated with increased odds of physical activities in a park [9].

#### 1.2. Improved Mental Well-Being

While the effects of parks on mental health are in part attributed to exercise, numerous studies indicate that simply spending time in parks, regardless of activity, contributes to lower levels of stress and higher levels of self-reported life satisfaction, happiness, and feelings that life is worthwhile [19–23].

Pfeiffer and colleagues noted that parks promote subjective well-being by providing a natural space in which visitors may enjoy opportunities for engagement, socializing, and exercise [24]. Their study in metropolitan Phoenix found that people who had greater perceived neighbourhood park access reported higher life satisfaction. Each additional acre of parks within the neighbourhood increased residents' life satisfaction score by 0.007 on a 1–5 scale measured by the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). In an Australian longitudinal study, Wood and colleagues found that the presence of a neighbourhood open space, which serves as the recreational and social focus of a community, leads to an increase of 0.15 points on the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (on a 14–70 continuous scale) [25].

While the dynamics between park features, distances to parks, frequencies of visits, and durations of time spent in parks are not clear, park exposure has been shown to reduce incidences of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and PTSD, as well as decrease mood disorder medication use and increase attention [19,21,22,26–32]. In a cohort study of 46,786 participants in Australia, Astell-Burt and Feng found lower rates of psychological distress in participants who spent time in greenspace, especially areas with trees [33]. A study by White and colleagues that examined associations between green/blue spaces and mental health across 18 countries found that the frequency of visits was positively associated with the World Health Organization's five-item well-being index (WHO-5), negatively associated with the likelihood of mental distress, and negatively associated with the likelihood of using depression medication [34]. In an ecological cross-sectional study of census tracts in New York City, Yoo and colleagues found that as the proximity to urban greenspace increased, the standardized rate of emergency room visits related to all mental disorders (SRER) decreased [35]. They also noted that as canopy cover levels increased, SRER visits tended to decrease.

Shanahan and colleagues conducted a study demonstrating that depression, high blood pressure, social cohesion, and physical activity are associated with both the frequency and duration of visits to greenspace [36]. Longer visits to greenspace were found to be correlated with reduced rates of depression and high blood pressure, while those who visited more frequently reported higher levels of social cohesion. A dose–response analysis for depression and high blood pressure suggested that weekly visits to outdoor greenspace lasting 30 min or more could reduce the population prevalence of these illnesses by up to 7% and 9%, respectively [4,36].

#### 1.3. Reduced Exposure to Air Pollution

Air pollution is one of the leading contributors to cardiac, respiratory, and lung cancer-related mortality. Every  $10 \,\mu g/m^3$  increase in air pollution results in 8%, 6%, and 4% increases in lung cancer, cardiorespiratory, and "all-cause" related mortality, respectively [36]. Higher levels of the air pollutants  $PM_{2.5}$ ,  $NO_2$ , and  $SO_2$  correlate with the number of visits to physicians, with more severe health risks for people in low socio-economic groups [37].

Konijnendijk and colleagues, in a systematic review of urban park benefits, confirmed that urban parks help remove air pollutants [38]. Through a meta-narrative systematic review, Zupancic and colleagues found that parks with a compact multi-layering of diverse species have the most significant benefits in terms of cooling and air pollution mitigation [39]. A study by Nowak and colleagues estimated the value of the improved air quality attributed to trees in the City of Toronto [1]. The researchers found that trees and shrubs throughout the city removed 1430 metric tons of air pollutants, including CO, NO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>3</sub>, PM10, and SO<sub>2</sub>, valued at CAD 20.4 million in avoided healthcare costs. The valuation methodology considered several factors, such as the cost of illness, willingness to pay to avoid illness, productivity losses resulting from adverse health events, and the value of a statistical life in cases of mortality. A 2018 study by Nowak et al. on the benefits of tree canopy cover in 86 cities in Canada revealed that tree coverage was able to eliminate 16,500 tons of pollution from the air, and contributed to health benefits amounting to

CAD 227.2 million in 2010 [2]. It also prevented 22,000 occurrences of acute respiratory symptoms, and 30 occurrences of human mortality throughout the cities.

#### 2. Materials and Methods

This study applied an ecohealth economic valuation framework to estimate the monetary value of health and well-being benefits of investing in a new urban park located in the downtown core of the City of Peterborough, Canada. The proposed park is a 1.2 acre urban square to be developed on land previously used as a parking lot. Figure 1 depicts the location of the proposed park in context with the surrounding area.

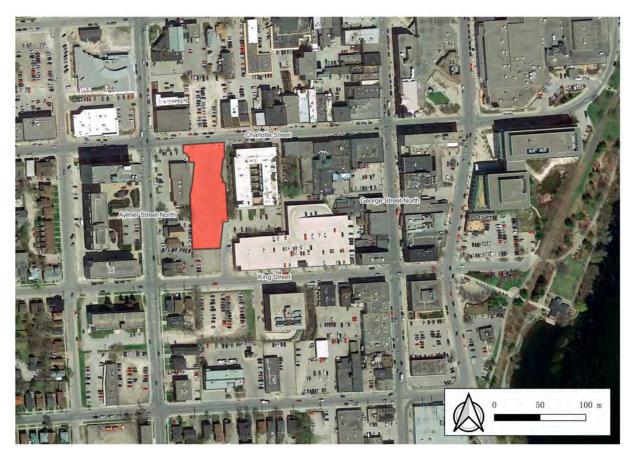


Figure 1. Map of proposed new urban park (Source: © OpenStreetMap contributors).

The proposal emerged out of the 2009 Central Area Master Plan, which called for the creation of a permanent, large, multi-purpose outdoor public square to provide local residents and the business community with access to a variety of park amenities, as well as support city efforts to revitalize the downtown core of the city [40]. Figure 2 presents a conceptual plan of the proposed urban park. Tree planting areas are located on the perimeter of the park and near the water geysers. Passive seating areas will be located in the shade provided by the trees. A public art display in honor of United Nations Peacekeepers will be placed in the northwest area of the park. During the winter season, the hard surface in the southern area of the park can be transformed into an ice-skating surface. The park design also includes a refrigeration building, a change room, and public washrooms.



Figure 2. Proposed urban park conceptual plan (Source: LETT ARCHITECTS Inc.).

#### 2.1. Ecohealth Framework

The ecohealth framework was developed to support decision makers in understanding the economic returns of health benefits, often overlooked in traditional analyses, resulting from investments in urban parks and greenspace. The framework links greenspace investments and subsequent changes to health outcomes, and the resulting economic benefits attributed to reduced incidences of adverse health outcomes. It was developed under the leadership of the EcoHealth Ontario (EHO) research group and Green Analytics. See Wilson et al., 2020, for a fulsome description of the approach used to develop the ecohealth economic framework [41].

Table 1 expands on the ecohealth framework in the context of the proposed urban park. Investing in a new urban park on land previously used as a parking lot provides new park space in the downtown core with a variety of amenities to serve nearby residents and the local business community. The investment will result in health benefits associated with improvements in physical and mental health attributed to park use, and health benefits resulting from increased vegetation cover. Given the complexity of connecting parks to specific population health outcomes, this study focused on three health outcomes with the strongest corroborating evidence, notably, physical health improvements associated with higher levels of physical activity; improved mental health associated with spending time in parks; and health improvements associated with reduced exposure to air pollution. The respective health improvements contribute to economic savings in terms of avoided costs to the health system. Therefore, estimating the economic benefits of the proposed urban park is a function of two key factors. The first is the incremental increase in park use, which includes the type of use, frequency of use, and time spent in parks, which supports higher levels of physical activity and improved mental health conditions. The second key factor is additional vegetation cover, which reduces exposure to air pollutants.

**Table 1.** Ecohealth framework applied to a new urban park.

Greenspace Investment	Change	Response	Health and Well-Being Benefits/Outcomes	Economic Benefits
Development of new urban park	Availability of park space Access to park amenities	Increase in Park Use Increase in vegetation cover	Physical Activity  Lower rates of obesity/overweightedness Improved birth weights Mental Health Lower rates of depression Stress reduction Improved cognitive function Higher social engagement Improved life satisfaction Reduced exposure to air pollution Fewer incidences of asthma and respiratory infections Fewer incidences of stroke, pulmonary disease and lung cancer	<ul> <li>Avoided costs of hospital care, physician services, and drugs</li> <li>Avoided costs related to short- or long-term disability</li> <li>Avoided costs of losses in productivity</li> <li>Avoided costs of losses in health-related quality of life from morbidity</li> <li>Avoided costs of premature mortality</li> </ul>

#### 2.2. Park Service Area

A park service area varies by park size, amenities, size of a city, and population density in the surrounding area. According to the City of Peterborough, the proposed urban park was designed to serve the local community within 800 m of the park, which is equivalent to a ten-minute walk [42]. The service area was determined based on the small park size, demographic profile of the local community, and availability of park space serving adjacent areas. Using the weighted population density of dissemination areas (neighbourhoods) falling within the 800-m radius service area, the park will serve 5919 people [43]. According to Statistics Canada Census data, 21.14% of residents in the service area are aged 65 years and above. Residents aged 25 to 34 years and residents aged 15 to 24 years old account for 18.09% and 16.80% of the service area population, respectively [43]. More than half of the residents in the service area live with low income, with total annual incomes under CAD 30,000 [43]. Detailed demographic and socio-economic data of the park service area available in the Supplementary Materials.

#### 2.3. Frequency of Park Use

The attribution of higher levels of physical activity are a function of park use. The frequency of park use was derived based on the population of the park service area and ease of access. Simply using the distance to the park to determine park accessibility, however, neglects other important factors that influence the willingness to travel, including demographic and socio-economic factors such as age, gender, health status, income, and urban factors such as built environment, public transit, and perceived safety. Drawing on the literature and target distances for access to greenspace commonly adopted by jurisdictions in Canada, ease of access was equated to three distance measures: very easy, equivalent to distances of 400 m or less (an approximate walking time of 5 min); easy, equivalent to distances between 400 m and 1 km (an approximate walking time of 10 min or less); more difficult, equivalent to distances between 1 km and 2 km (an approximate walking time of 20 min or less or a short car ride) [44–46]. The literature suggests that on average, 42% of residents with very easy access to a park use it at least once per week [44]. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of residents with easy access to a park use it at least once per week, and 20% of residents with more difficult access use a park once per week [44]. Assuming the weekly park usage rate has a linear relationship with residents' distance to the park, we estimated that 27% of residents within the service area will use the park weekly.

#### 2.4. Economic Benefits Attributed to Improved Health Outcomes

#### 2.4.1. Increased Physical Activity

The health benefit of increased physical activity attributed to park effect is based on the increase in the number of people engaging in moderate to vigorous physical activity on a weekly basis. The estimated economic value was determined by multiplying the change in physically active people by the avoided health care costs associated with physical inactivity.

Calculation: Annual health care benefit related to increased physical activity = change in the physically active population within the park service area  $\times$  avoided annual health care costs of physical inactivity per individual.

#### 2.4.2. Improved Mental Health Condition

Improvement in mental health condition was calculated by multiplying the population in the park service area with the percentage improvement in mental health conditions attributed to the presence of an urban park.

Calculation: Annual health care benefit related to improved mental health condition = population in park service area  $\times$  mental health improvement attributed to presence of an urban park  $\times$  avoided economic burden of mental illness.

#### 2.4.3. Improved Air Quality

Vegetation cover reduces exposure to air pollutants, providing population health benefits. The economic value of the health benefits attributed to air quality was obtained by multiplying the tree canopy cover within the park by the annual health savings per hectare of tree canopy cover.

Calculation: Air Quality Health Benefit = Park size in hectare  $\times$  percentage of tree canopy cover  $\times$  annual savings per hectare of tree canopy cover for Peterborough.

#### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Increased Physical Activity

To determine the incremental increase in the number of physically active people, residents within the 800-m service area were grouped into weekly park users (27%) and non-weekly park users (73%). Among all residents in the service area, the analysis by Kaczynski et al. was used to account for increases in physical activity simply attributed to the presence of a park [9]. Among weekly park users, increases in physical activity were based on the analyses by Kaczynski et al. and Schipperijn et al. that considered the influence of park features and amenities on park-based physical activities [13,47]. The calculation assumed that the baseline number of residents within the park service area that engage in 150 min or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per week is 16.4%, which is the Canadian average rate as reported in the 2017 Canadian Health Measures Survey by Statistics Canada [48]. Thus, the development of the downtown urban park will result in an additional 339 adults being physically active, according to the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines (at least 150 min of MVPA per week).

The economic value was estimated based on the avoided direct health care costs of physical inactivity derived by Krueger and colleagues, which equaled CAD 323.69 per person in 2019 dollars when adjusted for inflation by applying the annual average, not seasonally adjusted, Consumer Price Index as reported by Statistics Canada [49,50]. Therefore, the avoided annual health care costs due to increased levels of physical activity attributed to the development of the downtown urban park is CAD 109,877.

#### 3.2. Improved Mental Health Condition

A study by Wood and colleagues found that the presence of a neighbourhood open space, which serves as the recreational and social focus of a community, leads to an increase of 0.15 points measured by the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (on a 14–70 continuous scale) [25]. When converted to a percentage measure, the 0.15-point

increase is equivalent to an improvement of 0.2%. It was assumed that for residents within the park service area, park presence will lead to a 0.2% improvement in mental health condition.

The economic value associated with improved mental health condition is based on Lim and colleagues' study of the economic burden of mental illness in Canada which includes health service utilization, long-term and short-term work loss, and health-related quality of life [51]. After adjusting for inflation, the economic burden of mental illness in Canada is CAD 1950 in 2019 dollars per person per year. A 0.20% improvement in mental health condition among residents in the catchment area (5919) is equivalent to an avoided economic burden of CAD 23,084 per year.

#### 3.3. Improved Air Quality

The annual health savings per hectare of tree canopy cover was derived for the City of Peterborough based on a previous analysis by Nowak and colleagues [2]. After adjusting for inflation, the health savings per hectare was CAD 653 in 2019 dollars. According to the City of Peterborough Parks Development Standards, the park aims to provide at least 40% tree canopy cover [42]. The economic value was obtained by multiplying the park's size in hectares with the percentage of tree canopy cover and annual health savings per hectare of tree canopy cover. The urban park's contribution to better air quality will create an annual health savings of CAD 126.84.

#### 3.4. Summary of Economic Benefits

As noted in Table 2, the development of the small urban park will result in annual economic benefits of CAD 133,000 per year. The benefits include CAD 109,877 in the avoided economic burden of physical inactivity, CAD 23,084 in health savings associated with improved mental health, and CAD 127 in health savings attributed to better air quality.

Benefit Category	
Increased physical activity	CAD 109,877.00
Improved mental health condition	CAD 23,084.00
Improved air quality	CAD 126.84
Total	CAD 133,087.84

Table 2. Summary of economic benefits of proposed urban park (CAD, 2019).

#### 4. Discussion

Competing land use pressures and municipal responsibility for costs associated with park operation and maintenance can make it challenging for decision makers to support the development and expansion of urban parks. Applying the ecohealth framework highlights the economic value of health benefits linked to greenspace use and exposure. The results reported in this case study represent a portion of the proposed park's value, as we only considered a subset of known benefits attributed to park use and vegetation cover. Other benefits of the park could include, but are not limited to, respite from hot temperatures, heat island reduction in the city centre, relief from noise pollution, increased biodiversity, business attraction due to enhanced downtown environments and social benefits resulting from stronger feelings of community cohesion, higher levels of community engagement, and reduced isolation. A notable benefit we excluded was respite from heat-related stress provided by increased vegetation cover. We deemed this benefit to be marginal, as the proposed park is a small urban square. The current plan indicates that 20 trees will be planted. While the shading provided by the trees will be beneficial, the impact of the trees in reducing the surface level temperature is likely minimal.

Notable limitations of this analysis are the reliance on assumptions drawn from the broader literature and the application of regional or national average data to the specific case area. For instance, our estimate of park usage was based solely on park proximity, and did not consider population characteristics or pre-existing health conditions of residents within the service area. Additionally, the calculation of annual health savings attributed to an increase in tree canopy cover was based on data from a tree canopy study conducted in Peterborough by Nowak et al. [2]. The actual reduction in air pollutants and corresponding health savings would be contingent on factors such as the size and species of trees planted in the park, traffic volume on surrounding streets, and proximity to industrial areas [52]. Incorporating community-specific data into future studies that utilize the ecohealth framework would increase the rigor of the results.

An assumption used in our analysis which is open to debate is the delineation of the park service area to be an 800-m radius of the park. This range was adopted from the Peterborough park development plan. However, the proposed park uses, such as a weekly farmers' market and features such as a skating surface in the winter, would likely draw users from outside the targeted service area. To illustrate this point, a 2009 national farmers' market impact study of 70 farmers markets in Canada found that 69% of visitors use vehicles to reach these markets, suggesting a high probability of visitors living outside the local service area [53]. Hence, future analysis should consider a wider park service area. In addition to considering the potential benefits, such an analysis would need to consider the associated costs of pollution generated by vehicle use to reach the park.

We adopted park user estimates using access thresholds common in Canadian municipal policy guidelines, which were largely influenced by the WHO 2016 guidelines, European access to greenspace indicators, and Natural England [4,44–46,54]. Therefore, we assumed in this study that easy access or close proximity to park was within 400 m or less. A review article by Ekkel and de Vries (2016) affirmed a consensus in the literature that proximity to greenspace supports human health which is typically between 300 and 500 m. They noted, however, that there appears to be no empirical support for a specific cut-off value at those distances [55]. A study by Shindler and colleagues (2022), examining park use in three European cities, challenged the common policy assumption of park use largely being a function of proximity based on hundreds of meters. Their results suggested a median range of 1.4 to 1.9 km, which is much higher than the 400- and 800-m thresholds used in this study. Their study also noted, however, that respondents with access to quality local urban greenspace tended to travel less to reach an urban greenspace [56]. In the context of this study, as shown in Figure 1, users outside the 800-m park service have access to nearby high-quality greenspaces, suggesting that they would be less inclined to travel to the proposed park. Schindler and colleagues' findings highlight a need for applications of the ecohealth framework to be based on actual park user data. The potential to use mobile phone data to track park use and time in parks offers an interesting means to validate assumptions on the willingness to travel, mode of travel, and time spent in parks.

Assumptions regarding calculations of park users, park service area, health outcomes and economic benefits, drew on robust and well-regarded studies, or integrated consistent trends aggregated from across studies. These assumptions are open to debate. Calculations could easily be refined and updated as more locally relevant data become available, or to reflect changes in assumptions or new knowledge.

In addition to health system savings, we explored estimating the well-being benefit of the park based on contributions of the park to higher levels of life satisfaction. We estimated the well-being benefit by multiplying the population within the service area by improvement in life satisfaction scores per person attributed to the presence of an urban park. Pfeiffer and colleagues found that an additional acre of park space within a resident's living environment increased their life satisfaction score by 0.007 points (on a 1–5 scale), using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) [24]. Based on the acreage of the proposed urban park, it is estimated that, for the 5919 residents within the park service area, each of them will experience a 0.0084-point increase in life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS.

We derived the economic value of the associated improvement in life satisfaction based on the replacement cost of experiencing a similar improvement in life satisfaction. We adapted results from a study by Lora and Chaparro, where they found that increasing average life satisfaction by one point on the SWLS scale in a developed country requires a

per capita annual income of CAD 82,589 (in 2019 dollars), on average [57]. The 0.0084-point increase in life satisfaction anticipated by the park development equals an income increase of CAD 694 per resident in the catchment area, or CAD 4.1 million. While we can attach an economic value to higher levels of life satisfaction, we opted to report this value separately, given potential overlaps with improved physical health and mental health condition. In addition, policy makers and practitioners are less familiar with and confident in reporting the economic value of higher life satisfaction attributed to a park. When including the economic value of improved life satisfaction of CAD 4.1 million, the total health return on investment in one year is equivalent to 65% of the initial development cost. The payback or health return on park investment, in this case, is 1.5 years.

Future research on the ecohealth benefits provided by urban parks and greenspaces should be expanded to include a broader set of benefits. A notable benefit to include is respite from hot temperatures and extreme heat, given the increased frequency and duration of heatwaves around the world, and the strong links between heat stress and heat-related illness and mortality [58–61]. More generally, the economic analysis of health benefits would improve with greater understanding of the relationship between greenspace and health outcomes. To enhance the precision of park access thresholds, additional investigations could be conducted to incorporate neighborhood-specific factors, including socio-demographic and cultural variables, local urban design features such as bike lanes, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and public transit accessibility, and the availability of greenspace in the surrounding area. Current assumptions regarding park access thresholds in Canadian urban areas primarily rely on standards set by the World Health Organization or thresholds adopted by major cities such as Vancouver and Toronto [4,45,46]. However, mid-sized Canadian cities such as Peterborough have distinct urban environments that require further examination.

A potentially innovative approach to assessing park accessibility involves utilizing mobile phone location data to track actual park utilization, distances traveled, and time spent in parks. In addition, future research could delve into how city officials and community groups employ economic data on the health benefits associated with parks and greenspaces in practical applications, thereby gaining a better understanding of how such studies can bolster efforts to invest in green initiatives aimed at improving public health and strengthening urban climate resilience.

#### 5. Conclusions

This case study included the economic value of health benefits associated with higher levels of physical activity, improved mental health condition, and reduced exposure to air pollutants that would result from investing in a new urban park in downtown Peterborough. The results demonstrate the economic value of health benefits attributed to the development of the proposed urban park. Quantifying the health benefits provides planners, policy makers, and municipalities with a more fulsome understanding of the value provided by urban parks.

Investing in urban green space creates health, social, and environmental benefits for a community. Various health benefits, such as higher levels of physical activity, improvement in mental health condition, and reduced exposure to air pollutants, have economic value that is often ignored or overlooked in budgetary and planning exercises and decision making. This study provides evidence of those benefits by applying an ecohealth economic framework to quantify the monetary value of health benefits associated with the development of an urban park in downtown Peterborough, Canada. The study highlights the importance of urban parks and greenspaces to population health, and more generally as a community asset.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/ijerph20064815/s1, Detailed demographic data of the park service area.

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#### **ARTICLE**



# Factors associated with changes in subjective well-being immediately after urban park visit

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore the amenable factors contributing to the improvement in subjective well-being (SWB) immediately after a short-term visit to an urban park in an uncontrolled condition. Ninety-four park visitors from three urban parks completed a short questionnaire evaluating SWB (with two components: affect and life satisfaction) immediately before and after their park visit. In addition, their level of physical activity was tracked by wearing an accelerometer during the park visit. Results indicated a significant improvement in SWB, affect, and life satisfaction scores of park visitor participants from before and after their visit. Duration of park visit was bivariately associated with SWB scores, and independently associated with the improvement in life satisfaction scores, controlling for parks and age, after the visit; a 20.5-min park visit predicted the highest overall accuracy (64%) improvement in life satisfaction. It is recommended that design of the park space should attract visitors to stay for at least 20 min in the park.

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#### Introduction

Urban green space is defined as publicly accessible open areas covered with natural vegetation, a definition that includes parks within city boundaries (Schipperijn et al. 2013). Urban parks have been recognized as key neighborhood places that provide residents with opportunities to experience nature and engage in various activities. Through contact with the natural environment and engagement in health-promoting and/or social and recreational activities in parks, users experience physical and mental health benefits such as stress reduction and recovery from mental fatigue (Abraham et al. 2010; Konijnendijk et al. 2013; Kondo et al. 2018; Twohig-Bennett and Jones 2018). Residents who reported they used urban parks regularly exhibited higher scores in well-being and life satisfaction and lower scores in psychological distress and anxiety (Konijnendijk et al. 2013; Honold et al. 2014; Coldwell and Evans 2018). Therefore, urban parks are viewed as valuable contributors to the promotion of public health.

A growing body of evidence suggests that individuals who engage in a short-term visit (e.g. less than a couple hours) to an urban park also experience physiological and psychological restorative benefits. These benefits include enhancement in well-being (increase in positive affect and decrease in negative affect), reduction in emotional stress, and relief from mental fatigue (Mayer et al. 2009; Haluza et al. 2014; McMahan and Estes 2015; Kondo et al. 2018). In addition, several systematic reviews support the synergistic beneficial effect of engaging in



short-term physical activity in a natural environment when comparing different experimental conditions, including in urban parks, on the enhancement of well-being (Barton and Pretty, 2010; Bowler et al. 2010; Thompson Coon et al. 2011).

However, it is unclear whether the improvement in well-being after a short-term visit to an urban park is attributed to physical activity or nonphysical restorative activities such as social interaction, physical presence within the natural environment (i.e. some form of passive/ sedentary activity), or a combination of different activities. Studies have investigated the impact of physical activity in a natural environment (i.e. green exercise) on the improvement of mental health outcomes (Bowler et al. 2010; Thompson Coon et al. 2011), but few examine what amenable contributing factors (e.g. activity intensity during a park visit, duration of visit, or both) lead to an improvement in mental health after a short exposure to natural green spaces such as urban parks. The purpose of this study is to explore what factors contribute to the change (i.e. improvement) in subjective well-being (SWB; including affect and life satisfaction) immediately after a short-term visit to a neighborhood urban park in an uncontrolled condition.

#### Method

#### Research design and ethical approval

This study involved a one-group pretest-posttest survey research design. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, protocol number of X160216003.

#### **Participants**

Participants were adult visitors to one of the three urban parks in Mountain Brook, Birmingham, Alabama, United States. Data were collected from 98 adult park visitors; 4 visitors reported that they participated in this study twice. Data from the second participation were excluded, resulting in 94 unique participants participating in this study.

#### Study parks

The city of Mountain Brook is located in Jefferson County, Alabama, a suburb of Birmingham. The city spans 33.2 km<sup>2</sup> (or 12.8 mi<sup>2</sup>). Based on demographic data available from the United States Census Bureau Survey (United States Census Bureau 2013), it is estimated that the population of Mountain Brook in 2016 was 20,532 (https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/ pages/index.xhtml); 96.5% were White. The city of Mountain Brook manages seven public parks. Residents from two vicinity suburbs, Vestavia Hills (population = 34,243 with 91.1% White) and Homewood (population = 25,652 with 80.6% were White), also have easy access to these three parks.

The three urban parks included in this study were Overton Park, Jemison Park, and Cahaba River Walk. Overton Park is comprised of a large lawn area for picnics, a pavilion available to rent for events, and tennis and basketball courts. It has a large children's playground and a 0.3-km (or 0.2-mi) brick walking path. Jemison Park is a 0.2-km<sup>2</sup> area designed as a green way with a 1.6-km (or 1-mi) trail throughout the park. Cahaba River Walk (0.02 km<sup>2</sup>) consists of a nature path and lookout points along the Cahaba River, with easy access to the river for fishing, swimming, and rafting. There is also a pavilion for social gatherings, some exercise equipment, and open space for free play.

These parks were selected for the study because they were the three main public parks in Mountain Brook and had a relatively high volume of visitors daily.



#### **Procedures**

Research assistants received 2 h of orientation and training as a group in the administration of the study protocol prior to participant recruitment in the parks. They were stationed in pairs at the entrance or the parking lot of the three study parks and were responsible for participant recruitment. There were recruitment signs approved by the Mountain Brook City Council posted at the entrances and the parking lots of the three parks to inform visitors about the study. Park visitors were approached by the research assistants to provide information regarding study objectives and to seek consent to participate, regardless of race, gender, or age. The inclusion criterion were adults with a self-reported age of 18 years or above, planning to stay in the park for no more than 2-3 h, and willingness to participate in this study. If those criteria were met, participants were then asked to complete a short questionnaire and to wear an ActiGraph accelerometer while in the park.

The questionnaire had two parts; the first part included questions related to background information of the participant (age, gender, race, and residency), and questions asking how often the participant visited this park, reasons for visiting the park today, and how many times they had participated in this study. The second part was a set of 15 items that measured participants' SWB, which included two standardized measures: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al. 1985) and the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al. 1988). The accelerometer was used to record participants' level of physical activity during their park visit.

Research assistants waited at the entrance or the parking lot until the participant completed the park visit to collect the accelerometer and asked them to complete the second part of the same questionnaire that they did before their park visit. Participants did not have access to their prepark visit responses when completing the post-park visit questionnaire. The research assistants recorded the date and time on the questionnaire as the participant donned the accelerometer and headed to the park. After they completed the park visit, they were asked to complete the questionnaire again and to turn in the accelerometers.

The study started in late May and ended in early December 2016, with the majority of visitors enrolled in the month of June (36%), followed by October (23%) and July (15%). Research assistants collected data on both weekdays (95%) and weekends (5%), with the majority of visitors enrolled on Wednesday (31%), followed by Monday (22%) and Tuesday (22%). Research assistants were stationed in the parks on different times of day from 7 am to 6 pm, with the majority of visitors enrolled in the study between 4 pm and 6 pm (36%), followed by 8 am-9 am (13%) and 2 pm-3 pm (13%).

#### **Outcome** measure

The outcome measure of this study was the SWB, an indicator of mental health and commonly associated with happiness, which has been used to assess the impact of urban parks on mental health (Saw et al. 2015). The SWB was a composite of the constructs of life satisfaction and affect balance (Liang 1985; Diener 1994). The SWB score was calculated using the following formula: SWLS score + (positive affect score - negative affect score).

Life satisfaction was assessed using the SWLS (Diener et al. 1985), which is used to evaluate the global self-assessment of one's quality of life. The SWLS consists of five statements where participants indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement about their life satisfaction using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Affect balance is the balance between positive and negative affect (i.e. pleasant and unpleasant emotion) and was assessed using the PANAS (Watson et al. 1988). The instrument consists of 10 affective adjective words with five positive affect (alert, inspired, determined, attentive, and



active) and five negative affect (upset, hostile, ashamed, nervous, and afraid). Participants were asked to indicate how they feel right now (i.e. immediately before and right after their park visit) as described in each of the 10 affective adjective words on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always. The affect balance score was computed by subtracting the negative affect score from the positive affect score. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the SWB (15 items) for this study was .63, which is considered to be acceptable (Loewenthal 2001). Whereas the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the SWLS (5 items), and the PANAS (10 items) for this study was .82, and .52, respectively.

#### Data analysis

Significant difference in the response to the SWB questionnaire before and after park visit was evaluated using a paired-samples t-test. The objective of this study is to identify factors that contributed to the change in SWB, affect, and life satisfaction right after a short-term visit to the urban park. As expected, the change scores of the SWB, PANAS, and SWLS (response variables) were not normally distributed; therefore, data were recoded, and multivariable logistic regression analysis was performed. The mean and median of the change (improvement) in participants' SWB from before to after park visit was 1.4 unit and 1 unit, respectively. There were 59.6% of participants (n = 56) whose SWB scores improved after the park visit. Of which, 13.8% (n = 13) showed 1 unit of improvement, and 45.7% (n = 43) showed more than 1 unit of improvement. There were 40.4% of participants (n = 38) whose SWB scores did not improve after the park visit, with 12.7% (n = 12) showing no change and 27.7% (n = 26) deteriorated.

Placing the cutoff value at the median is a commonly used method to separate the ability of a group of participants into two, with one scoring above the median (i.e. improvement), and the other scoring at or below the median (no improvement; Mills and Melican 1988). The SWB change score was recoded as 1 if participants' scores between before and after park visit were greater than one point, which meant participants experienced an improvement in well-being immediately after the park visit (45.7%). The SWB change score was coded as 0 if participants' scores between before and after park visit were negative, the same (i.e. no change) or improved only one point, which meant participants perceived either no detectable change, or deterioration in well-being immediately after the park visit (54.3%).

Distribution of participants' change scores of the PANAS and SWLS after the park visit was as follows: The median of the change (improvement) in participants' PANAS scores from before to after park visit was 1 unit. There were 53.2% of participants (n = 50) whose PANAS scores improved after the park visit. Of which, 22.3% (n = 21) showed 1 unit of improvement, and 30.9% (n = 29) showed more than 1 unit of improvement. There were 46.8% of participants (n = 44) whose PANAS scores did not improve after the park visit, with 25.5% (n = 24) showing no change and 21.3% (n = 20) deteriorated. The PANAS change score was recoded as 1 if participants' scores between before and after park visit were greater than one point (30.9%, n = 29), and the PANAS change score was coded as 0 if participants' scores between before and after park visit were negative, the same, or improved only one point (69.1%, n = 65).

The median of the change (improvement) in participants' SWLS scores from before to after park visit was 0. There were 46.8% of participants (n = 44) whose SWLS scores improved after the park visit. There were 53.2% of participants (n = 50) whose SWLS scores did not improved after the park visit, with 36.2% (n = 34) showing no change and 17.0% (n = 16) deteriorated. The SWLS change score was recoded as 1 if participants' scores improved after the park visit (46.8%, n = 44), and the SWLS change score was coded as 0 if participants' scores between before and after park visit were negative or the same (53.2%, n = 50).

Potential explanatory variables included in the multivariable logistic regression model were number of steps as registered in the accelerometer, time spent in the park, mean activity intensity, which was estimated by dividing the number of steps recorded in the accelerometer by the amount of time spent in the park (i.e. steps per minute); age; gender (female = 2 vs. male = 1); race (White = 2 vs. non-White = 1); residency: A = local (i.e. residents of the three suburbs, Mountain Brook, Vestavia Hills, and Homewood, next to the parks), B = vicinity suburb or city, other than the three suburbs, to the parks, C = another county, out of state, or oversees; park: Overton, Jemison, and Cahaba River Walk; and frequency of visit to the park (≥5 days/week = 4, 3-4 days/week = 3, 1-2 days/week = 2, and <1 day/week = 1). The prevalence of non-White in this study sample was extremely low (3%). Since extremely low-prevalence binary explanatory variables have been shown to affect model fitting (Ogundimu et al. 2016), race was not included in the model.

For the preliminary analysis related to the multivariable logistic regression modeling, explanatory variables were initially screened for consideration in the model using bivariate association between each explanatory variable and the response variable. For the adjusted analysis, a multivariable logistic regression model was fit with improvement in SWB scores as the response variable. Explanatory variables were considered as candidates for inclusion in the multivariable logistic regression analysis if they were significantly associated with the response variable (p-value < .10) in the bivariate analyses (Harrell 2001). A backward stepwise procedure was used for model building to obtain the most parsimonious sets of explanatory variables for participants' improvement in SWB scores after the park visit. Since SWB scores comprised two scales (PANAS and SWLS), analyses were also conducted to evaluate factors associated with participants' improvement in PANAS and SWLS scores after the park visit.

Explanatory variables whose regression coefficients had p-values less than .05 were retained in the multivariable logistic regression models. All data analyses were conducted using the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 23 (www.spss.com).

Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was performed for the explanatory variables such as park visit duration to assess the area under the curve (AUC) and identify an optimal cutoff value that indicated a high probability for participants exhibiting improvement in SWB after the park visit.

#### Results

The mean and standard deviation change (improvement) in participants' SWB from before to after park visit was 1.43 unit and 3.56 units, respectively, and the mean duration of park visit was 32 min (ranged from few minutes to ~1.5 h), with 45% of the participants staying more than half-an-hour in the park. There was a significant improvement in the SWB scores from before (M = 37.83, SD = 6.69) to after (M = 39.26, SD = 6.71) park visit; t(93) = 3.88, p < .001, with an effect size (Cohen's d) of .4. Significant improvement in the scores of the two SWB components (affect balance and life satisfaction) was also observed. The PANAS scores increased from before (M = 8.74, SD = 3.92) to after (M = 9.55, SD = 3.81) the park visit, p = .004, d = .3, and the SWLS scores increased from before (M = 29.09, SD = 4.32) to after (M = 29.70, SD = 4.13) the park visit, p = .005, d = .3.

Thirty percent of participants engaged in physical activity of more than 100 steps/min while they were in the park, which is equivalent to three or more metabolic equivalent of tasks (METs; Marshall et al. 2009). Three METs and above indicate that participants engaged in at least moderate intensity physical activities (Marshall et al. 2009). There was a strong association between amount of time spent in the park and number of steps recorded (r = .8, p < .001). No significant differences were found between gender and frequency of park visit, amount of time spent in the park, number of steps recorded, or mean intensity of physical activity during the park visit. There were no significant association between time in the park and deterioration in SWB (p = .13, n = 26), SWLS (p = .45, n = 16), or PANAS (p = .28, n = 20). Table 1 shows the demographic information of participants and their activity pattern for the park visit.

Table 1. Sociodemographics of participants and their activity pattern for the park visit (N = 94).

		Number (%)/mean $\pm$ SD (range)	ge)
		Participants whose SWB scores	Participants whose SWB scores showed no change or
Variable	All participants ( $N = 94$ )	improved after the park visit ( $n = 56$ )	deteriorated after the park visit $(n = 38)$
Age (years)	$42.2 \pm 17.5$ (range: 18–86)	$43.1 \pm 15.7$ (range: 19–75)	$41.6 \pm 18.8$ (range: 18–86)
Female	55 (58.5%)	38 (67.9%)	17 (44.7%)
White <sup>a</sup>	91 (96.8%)	53 (94.6%)	38 (100%)
Residency			
Local	69 (73.4%)	41 (73.2%)	28 (73.7%)
Vicinity suburb	7 (7.5%)	4 (7.1%)	3 (7.9%)
Out of state, county, or oversees	18 (19.1%)	11 (19.6%)	7 (18.4%)
Park			
Overton	28 (29.8%)	19 (33.9%)	9 (23.7%)
Jemison	44 (46.8%)	21 (37.5%)	17 (44.7%)
Cahaba River Walk	22 (23.4%)	7 (12.5%)	12 (31.6%)
Frequency of park visit			
≥5 days/week	31 (33.0%)	18 (32.1%)	13 (34.2%)
3–4 days/week	35 (37.2%)	21 (37.5%)	14 (36.8%)
1–2 days/week	13 (13.8%)	7 (12.5%)	6 (15.8%)
<1 days/week	15 (16.0%)	10 (17.9%)	5 (13.2%)
Number of steps recorded in the accelerometer	2548.2 ± 1988.9 (range: 162–7580)	2641.1 ± 2034.3 (range: 175–7580)	2411.2 ± 1938.7 (range: 162–6048)
Time spent in the park (min)	$31.9 \pm 17.8$ (range: 4–86)	$34.7 \pm 18.1$ (range: 4–86)	$27.9 \pm 16.8$ (range: 4–63)
Mean activity intensity (steps/min)	77.6 $\pm$ 35.3 (range: 8–156.3)	72.6 $\pm$ 34.6 (range: 8.0–151.8)	85.1 ± 35.5 (range: 8.6–156.3)

<sup>a</sup>One of each of the following non-White race/ethnicity: Asia, Black, and Hispanic. SWB: subjective well-being.



#### Factors associated with participants' improvement in SWB scores after the park visit

From the results of the bivariate analyses, variables with a p-value of less than .10 included in the multivariable logistic regression model were time spent in the park (p = .036), Cahaba River Walk (p = .005), age (p = .072), and gender (p = .044). After adjusting for the explanatory variables, only Cahaba River Walk (p = .004) and gender (p = .033) were included in the final multivariable logistic regression model for participants' improvement in SWB scores after the park visit.

#### Factors associated with participants' improvement in PANAS scores after the park visit

From the results of the bivariate analyses, variables with a p-value of less than .10 included in the multivariable logistic regression model were Cahaba River Walk (p = .056), age (p = .022), and gender (p = .071). After adjusting for the explanatory variables, only age (p = .043) was included in the final multivariable logistic regression model for participants' improvement in PANAS scores after the park visit.

#### Factors associated with participants' improvement in SWLS scores after the park visit

From the results of the bivariate analyses, variables with a p-value of less than .10 included in the multivariable logistic regression model were time spent in the park (p = .064), Cahaba River Walk (p = .013), Overton Park (p = .081), and age (p = .035). After adjusting for the explanatory variables, only time spent in the park, Overton Park, and age were included in the final multivariable logistic regression model for participants' improvement in SWLS scores after the park visit. For participants who stayed one more minute in the park, a 3% improvement in the odds of the SWLS scores would be perceived right after the park visit (adjusted odds ratio (OR) = 1.03, 95% confidence interval (CI) = 1.00-1.06, p = .026). Multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance and the variance inflation factor; no multicollinearity was found among the explanatory variables. The OR of each explanatory variable with significant effect on the participants' improvement in SWLS scores after the park visit is shown in Table 2.

Figure 1 shows the ROC curve for park visit duration as an explanatory variable of improvement in SWLS after the park visit. The AUC of park visit duration for predicting improvement in SWLS after the park visit was 0.64 (95% CI: 0.52-0.75), p = .023, demonstrating that park visit duration was considered as a fair explanatory variable of improvement in SWLS after the park visit. The ROC curve and its corresponding AUC, an index of discrimination, showed that a park visit duration of 20.5 min has the predictive ability to discriminate park visitors who exhibited improvement in SWB from those who did not after the park visit. Results for the ROC curve analysis for the park visit duration for predicting improvement in SWB were in agreement with the analysis of the park visit duration for predicting improvement in SWLS, showing that a park visit duration of 19.5 min has the predictive ability to discriminate park visitors who exhibited improvement in SWB from those who did not after the park visit.

Table 2. Bivariate and multivariable logistic regression analyses examining factors associated with improvement in scores of Satisfaction with Life Scale after the park visit.

	Bivariate analysis		Multivariable analysis			
Predictor	OR	95% CI	<i>p</i> -value	Adj OR	95% CI	<i>p</i> -value
Time spent in the park (min)	1.02	1.00-1.05	.064	1.03	1.00-1.06	.026
Age (years)	0.97	0.95-1.00	.035	0.97	0.95-1.00	.032
Overton Park	2.23	0.91-5.51	.081	3.57	1.29-9.88	.014
Cahaba River Walk	0.25	0.08-0.75	.013			

Adj OR: adjusted odds ratio; CI: confidence interval.

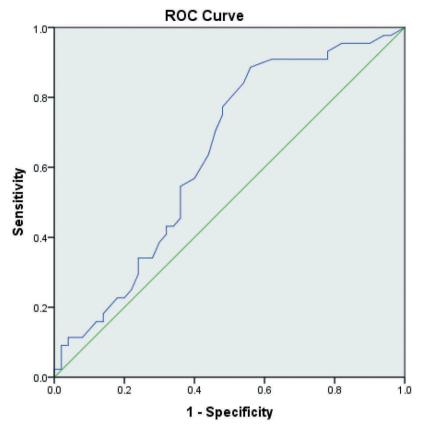


Figure 1. Area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve for the park visit duration to predict detectable improvement in scores of Satisfaction with Life Scale after park visit. Area under the curve (AUC) = 0.64, 95% confidence interval (CI) = 0.52-0.75, p = .023.

Taking the maximum Youden's index *J* (sensitivity + specificity – 1) as the criterion for the optimal cutoff value (Youden 1950), a score greater than or equal to the optimal cutoff value on park visit duration provided the highest overall accuracy in predicting improvement in SWLS after the park visit. Table 3 shows sensitivity and specificity over a range of cutoff values for the park visit duration. Sensitivity is the proportion of SWLS improvement that park visit duration correctly identified park visitors who actually had an improvement in SWLS. Specificity was the proportion of no SWLS improvement that park visit duration correctly identified park visitors who did not show an improvement in SWLS (Streiner and Cairney 2007; Carter et al. 2016). A cutoff park visit duration of 20.5 min could predict improvement in life satisfaction with a sensitivity of 89% and a specificity of 44%.

#### Discussion and conclusions

Results of this study indicated a significant improvement in SWB (including PANAS and SWLS) scores of park visitor participants from before to after their visit, and the amount of time the participants spent in the park (i.e. visit duration) was associated with the improvement in SWB and SWLS scores after the park visit. The SWB scores were bivariately associated with improvement in SWB scores after the park visit, whereas the SWLS scores were independently associated with improvement in SWLS scores after the park visit, controlling for the park and age. Findings from this study were consistent with those in the literature (Barton and Pretty, 2010; Hansmann et al. 2007;



Table 3. Using the Youden's index (J) to select the optimal cutoff value for the park visit duration in predicting improvement in scores of Satisfaction with Life Scale after park visit.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	3.000 4.500 6.500 8.500 9.500 11.000 13.500 16.000 17.500 18.500	1.000 .977 .977 .955 .955 .955 .955	.000 .040 .060 .100 .120 .140	.000 .017 .037 .055 .075 .095
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	6.500 8.500 9.500 11.000 13.500 16.000 17.500	.977 .955 .955 .955 .955 .955	.060 .100 .120 .140 .180	.037 .055 .075 .095
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	8.500 9.500 11.000 13.500 16.000 17.500	.955 .955 .955 .955 .932	.100 .120 .140 .180	.055 .075 .095
5 6 7 8 9 10 11	9.500 11.000 13.500 16.000 17.500	.955 .955 .955 .932	.120 .140 .180	.075 .095
6 7 8 9 10 11	11.000 13.500 16.000 17.500	.955 .955 .932	.140 .180	.095
7 8 9 10 11	13.500 16.000 17.500	.955 .932	.180	
8 9 10 11 12	16.000 17.500	.932		
9 10 11 12	17.500			.135
10 11 12			.220	.152
11 12	18.500	.909	.220	.129
12		.909	.320	.229
	19.500	.909	.380	.289
	20.500	.886	.440	.326
13	21.500	.841	.460	.301
14	22.500	.795	.500	.295
15	23.500	.773	.520	.293
16	24.500	.750	.520	.270
17	25.500	.705	.540	.245
18	26.500	.636	.560	.196
19	28.500	.568	.600	.168
20	30.500	.545	.640	.185
21	31.500	.500	.640	.140
22	32.500	.455	.640	.095
23	33.500	.432	.660	.092
24	34.500	.432	.680	.112
25	36.000	.409	.680	.089
26	37.500	.386	.700	.086
27	38.500	.341	.720	.061
28	39.500	.341	.740	.081
29	40.500	.341	.760	.101
30	41.500	.295	.760	.055
31	43.000	.250	.780	.030
32	44.500	.227	.800	.027
33	47.000	.227	.820	.047
34	49.500	.205	.840	.045
35	50.500	.182	.860	.042
36	51.500	.159	.860	.019
37	52.500	.159	.880	.039
38	53.500	.136	.900	.036
39	54.500	.114	.920	.034
40	57.000	.114	.940	.054
41	59.500	.114	.960	.074
42	61.500	.091	.960	.051
42	63.500	.091	.980	.071
		.068		.048
44 45	66.500 73.500		.980	
45	73.500	.045	.980	.025
46	81.500	.023	.980	.003
47 48	85.500 87.000	.023 .000	1.000 1.000	.023 .000

Note. The maximum J value is in bold.

White et al. 2013; Carrus et al. 2015) that length of visit to an urban park is an important factor related to psychological restorative benefits. This study supported Barton and Pretty's argument that urban green space contributed to enhancement of SWB beyond being physically active in the natural environment as visit duration has also shown beneficial effects on the visitors' mental health (Barton and Pretty, 2010). The ROC analysis showed that park visit duration was somewhat better than chance in correctly discriminating between participants' improvement in SWB or life satisfaction and those who did not improve after the park visit. Evaluation of the area under the ROC curves demonstrated that, among park visitors, a park visit duration of 20 min provided modest overall accuracy for improvement in SWB or life satisfaction.



Changes in SWB of the park visitors observed in this study could be explained by the Stress Recovery Theory (Ulrich et al. 1991). It is suggested that natural green space can facilitate stress recovery through autonomic nervous system changes that enhance positive affect and diminish negative affect (Bowler et al. 2010; Lovell et al. 2014; McMahan and Estes 2015). Therefore, improvements in participants' SWB could be mediated through perceived psychological restoration and stress recovery (Carrus et al. 2015) and increased connectedness to nature (Mayer et al. 2009).

This study validated that a short-term direct exposure to the urban parks promote positive changes in SWB (i.e. affect and life satisfaction), and these changes were associated with participants' visit duration. Whether such a short-term effect on the change in SWB or life satisfaction resulted in longer term health benefits if park visitors exposure to urban park was on a regular basis was unclear. Even though the present study did not investigate the longer term sustained effect of enhancement in SWB or life satisfaction after urban park visit, existing literature (Barton et al. 2012; Korpela et al. 2016) has provided some evidence on the culminated and sustained effect of individual park visit session on improving mental well-being.

### Limitations

Data on reasons to the park visit were collected before participants' entered the park instead of after the visit, and the response was open-ended. As a result, it was unclear exactly what activities the participants were engaged during the park visit, and categorization of these data to provide quantitative analysis was limited. About three quarters of participants indicated that they came to the park to walk their dog, or to walk, run, or exercise, and several participants indicated that they walked or played with friends or their children, but the exact number of participants for each category cannot be verified as some wrote they performed multiple categories of activities. The study time frame was limited to only 6 months with summer and fall seasons, excluding the winter and spring months. Also, the research assistants did not stay in the three parks continuously from 7 am to 6 pm everyday (weekdays and weekends) throughout the entire 6 months. The duration of the participants' stay in the park was slightly less than 1.5 h, which limited the interpretation of the findings beyond this duration. Comparison of visit duration and improvement in SWB or life satisfaction across the three parks was not conducted as the sample size of park visitors of each park was relatively small. Finally, it would have strengthened the validity of the findings, had there been a control group included to adjust for the changes in mood changes over time.

## Implications for practice and advancement of research

The results of this study showed that improvement in SWB and SWLS scores was associated with the duration of time spent in urban parks. This dose-response indicated that by increasing the minutes of participants to stay in the park would increase the odds or chances for their improvement in SWB or life satisfaction after the park visit. Therefore, it is imperative that urban planners and landscape architects factor in duration of time visitors spent in the park as an outcome of the success of the park design. This study suggests that designing space to ensure that visitors are motivated to spend more time per park visit will enhance the well-being benefits. To achieve this objective, urban planners and landscape architects need to ensure that parks are not overdesigned but focus on trees, grass, walkways, and rest areas so that they satisfy the needs of a broad range of visitors. Increased biodiversity and quality of green areas may help attract visitors stay longer in the park (Pazhouhanfar 2018), and exposure to biodiversity has also been shown to improve well-being (Lovell et al. 2014). Parks should retain or enhance the natural contours of land and allow the visitors to both see and walk through it. Features within the park should capture the attention and imagination of visitors, allowing time



for discovery and restoration through the inclusion of walkways for intentional walking and features and elements that promote satisfaction and engagement. The goal of designers should be to motivate visitors to remain in the space beyond a fleeting visit, and this will be achieved by creating space that interest people and that people value parks as part of their neighborhood.

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## Association between Urban Greenspace and Health: A Systematic Review of Literature

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**Abstract:** The current review aimed to explore the association between urban greenspaces and health indicators. In particular, our aims were to analyze the association between publicly accessible urban greenspaces exposure and two selected health outcomes (objectively measured physical activity (PA) and mental health outcomes (MH)). Two electronic databases—PubMed/Medline and Excerpta Medica dataBASE (EMBASE)—were searched from 1 January 2000 to 30 September 2020. Only articles in English were considered. Out of 356 retrieved articles, a total of 34 papers were included in our review. Of those, 15 assessed the association between urban greenspace and PA and 19 dealt with MH. Almost all the included studies found a positive association between urban greenspace and both PA and MH, while a few demonstrated a non-effect or a negative effect on MH outcomes. However, only guaranteeing access is not enough. Indeed, important elements are maintenance, renovation, closeness to residential areas, planning of interactive activities, and perceived security aspects. Overall, despite some methodological limitations of the included studies, the results have shown almost univocally that urban greenspaces harbour potentially beneficial effects on physical and mental health and well-being.

Keywords: physical activity; mental health; depression; anxiety; stress; green areas; green infrastructures; urban greenery; urban health; non-communicable diseases



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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, humans live in a predominantly urban world. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people living in urban areas rose by 25% [1]. Worldwide forecasts estimate that 6 out of 10 people will live in cities by 2030, a figure that will reach 8 out of 10 by 2050 [2]. This progressive increase has led the scientific community to explore and assess the urban environment's salutogenic effects [3]. On the one hand, urbanization has improved populations' health status, thanks to better career and education opportunities, and increased access to essential healthcare services [4,5]. On the other hand, rapidly growing cities pose new public health threats. Among those is the increase in social inequalities and lifestyle-related risk factors, such as lack of physical activity and unbalanced dietary habits [6,7], pollution and traffic, and the environmental degradation of natural areas [8]; which, in turn, increase the incidence of a vast spectrum of diseases and conditions [9,10]. Overcrowding exacerbates the risks of communicable diseases (CD), as shown by the COVID-19 pandemic [11–13]. Urbanicity might also represent a risk factor for chronic non-communicable diseases (NCD) and other leading causes of death and disability, such as, for instance, road traffic injuries and violent crimes. As cities exploit a large share

of the world's natural resources, they account for a considerable contribution to climate change-related health issues [14,15]. Urbanization's overall health impact also depends on specific populations' elements of vulnerability and resilience, their ability to adapt to environmental changes, on health services organization and urban planning. In this perspective, the idea that urban green areas might exert health benefits dates back to the early 1800s. Healthcare organizations such as the Commons Prevention Society and the National Health Society started advocating for the creation of publicly accessible urban green spaces, describing them as "the lungs of the city" [16].

In more recent times, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe has launched a "WHO European Healthy Cities Network", which embodies a "Healthy Cities" vision. Moreover, referring to the "Urban Health Rome Declaration" at European meeting "G7 Health", which defines the strategic aspects and actions to improve Public Health into the cities, and referring to the Agenda 2030, in which the 11th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) argues about "Sustainable Cities and Communities. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", one of the most expressive syntheses of the challenging relationship between urban planning and Public Health is stated by World Health Organization (WHO, 2016): "Health is the precondition of urban sustainable development and the first priority for urban planners". According to the project's programmatic framework, "cities' healthiness level is indicated "by a process, not an outcome". The Network defines "a healthy city" as "one that continually creates and improves its physical and social environments and expands the community resources that enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and developing to their maximum potential" [17]. Several studies have shown that green areas can improve general well-being [18], self-perceived health status [19,20], increase physical activity (PA) levels [21,22], curb morbidity and rise life expectancy [23], satisfaction with their housing situation, jobs, and life perspectives [24]. However, the evidence is still somehow ambiguous. Previous research failed to univocally and conclusively demonstrate the beneficial effect of urban green space on both physical and mental health [25,26]. This is probably due to high heterogeneity in the population's characteristics, study period, sample size and study design, but also due to the green area and infrastructure features included and analyzed.

In light of the above considerations, the current review's broader objective was to explore the association between urban greenspaces and health indicators. The specific aim was to analyze the direction and strength of the association between urban greenspaces exposure and two selected health outcomes: objectively measured PA, and mental health (MH) outcomes in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Our ultimate goal was to critically appraise the available evidence so as to offer material to inform future community-based urban planning strategies and public health policy initiatives.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The methods for this systematic review were designed following the Cochrane Collaboration's recommended approach [27]. We conducted each phase of the study and reported its results according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) [28] and the Meta-analysis Of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (MOOSE) [29] guidelines.

## 2.1. Search Methods for Study Retrieval

Studies were retrieved by searching two electronic databases, PubMed/Medline and Excerpta Medica dataBASE (EMBASE). The search strategy was developed in September 2020 by pooling predetermined keywords launched at first on PubMed/Medline and then adapted for EMBASE. Whenever possible, controlled vocabulary thesauruses—PubMed's MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) and EMBASE's Emtree—were used to explore broader content. Items were logically combined with the Boolean operators "AND", "OR" and

"NOT". The full search strategy is available in Supplementary Table S1. The list of references was also screened to identify any additional eligible studies. Finally, experts in the field were consulted. We developed a standardized protocol to identify the research question, formulate the search strategy, set inclusion and exclusion criteria and select quality appraisal tools for primary studies. The protocol was shared and discussed within the research team and fully approved before starting the review.

### 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Since we focused on the association between urban greenspaces objectively measured physical activity (PA) and mental health (MH), we only included original papers measuring PA objectively through accelerometer, pedometer, video recording or similar devices. For MH outcomes, we assessed a plurality of domains, including, but not limited to, the most prevalent MH disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and psychosocial stress. Outcomes could be calculated as continuous or dichotomic, indifferently. Moreover, we accepted both self-reported measures and data extracted from clinical databases and repositories or self-assessed by interviews for MH outcomes. As for publicly accessible of urban greenspace exposure, we referred to the general definition reported in 2016 by the WHO Regional Office for Europe (EURO): "public green areas used predominantly for recreation such as gardens, zoos, parks and suburban natural areas and forests, or green areas bordered by urban areas that are managed or used for recreational purposes" [30]. However, we also relied on a more detailed definition issued by a 2017 EURO brief for action [31]. We finally synthesized the theoretical framework with extensive consultation of experts in the field. Details are provided in Supplementary Table S2.

Furthermore, to improve the internal validity, we set a geographic limit, including only studies conducted in the OECD area. We also opted for a language limit, selecting only articles published in English. Lastly, we adopted a time limit, filtering for studies after 2000. We used this time limit for several scientific reasons. Firstly, the availability of techniques to objectively measure PA dates back to the last 10 to 15 years. Therefore, we judged it implausible to find older studies meeting our pre-fixed criteria. A recent systematic review indirectly confirms our hypothesis, since the earliest study assessing the association between objectively measured PA and depression was published in 2004 [32]. Secondly, OECD's urban areas have known profound changes over the last 20 years. Besides, the psychiatric nosography itself has evolved, with updates to many diagnostic criteria. Therefore, we assumed that extending the time frame of our research indiscriminately could undermine its results, with the concrete risk of collecting heterogeneous, poorly comparable data for both outcomes.

Finally, we excluded all non-original studies (e.g., reviews, book chapters, correspondence, brief notes, commentaries, conference proceedings, abstracts). Supplementary Table S3 shows a detailed description of inclusion and exclusion criteria for both observational and interventional studies, developed in accordance with the Population, Intervention/Exposure, Comparison, Outcomes and Study design (PEOS), adjusted for observational studies, and extended with time and language filters, as recommended by the Cochrane Collaboration [33].

## 2.3. Study Selection, Data Extraction and Quality Evaluation

All identified records were analyzed in a two-step process. First, three researchers (G.S., R.C., A.O.-A.) independently screened titles and abstracts to assess potential eligibility; then, eligible studies were evaluated in full. A pre-defined, customized spreadsheet was used to extract and collect useful data (Microsoft Excel® for Windows Redmond, WA, USA, 2007). As carried out before [34], to reduce methodological heterogeneity and to standardize data extraction, the spreadsheet was pre-piloted by four researchers (V.G., G.S., R.C., A.O.-A.) on 10 randomly selected records. Disagreements were solved by discussion among the three researchers involved in the study selection (G.S., R.C., A.O.-A.), or by the decision of a fourth (senior) researcher (V.G.).

As carried out in previous systematic reviews [35–37], both qualitative and quantitative data were extracted from the original studies. Qualitative data recorded included the following items: name of the first author, year of publication, study period, country, study design, type of urban greenspace analyzed, city where the study was conducted, statistical analysis performed, tool used to measure PA or MH, and outcomes domain (for PA, we differentiated between PA generally performed or performed in the greenspace analyzed; for mental health, we specified which type of condition was assessed, e.g., depression, anxiety, stress, etc.). Moreover, when available, sociodemographic characteristics of the subjects were recorded (e.g., age, gender). The quantitative data extracted included: sample size, and the most relevant results quantifying the association between urban greenspace and PA or MH. For studies displaying incomplete or partial data, the corresponding author was reached via e-mail for clarifications.

The quality evaluation of the included publications was carried out independently by three authors (A.M., G.S., and A.O.-A.) using the New-Ottawa Scale (NOS) for observational studies [38] and the Risk of Bias-2 (RoB-2) of the Cochrane Collaboration tool for randomized trials [39]; the National Institute of Health quality assessment tool for pre-post intervention studies [40], as suggested by Ma et al. [41]. However, since the NOS did not provide a checklist for cross-sectional studies, we used a modified version [42], adapted to perform a quality assessment of cross-sectional studies. We also used the NOS to assess the methodological quality of quasi-experimental studies, due to their observational nature. We used the 15-item checklist proposed by Dufault and colleagues for ecological studies [43]. Referring to the NOS, the maximum quality score (QS) is 9, categorized as follow: QS > 7 high quality,  $5 < QS \le 7$  moderate quality, and QS  $\le 5$  low quality. For the quality assessment of randomized trials, the evaluation only allows for a quality judgment without quantitative results ranging between high risk of bias, some concern and low risk of bias. This is the same also for pre-post intervention, for which the judgment can be good (if score  $\geq$  75%), fair (score between 75% and 25%), and poor (if score  $\leq$  25%). Regarding the QS suggested by Dufault et al. for ecological studies, the maximum score is 21 points, of which QS  $\leq$  7 was considered low quality, 7 < QS  $\leq$  14 was considered moderate quality and lastly QS >14 was considered high quality.

## 3. Results

## 3.1. Literature Search

A total of 356 records were initially retrieved by the literature search. After duplicate removal, 336 records were left for the title-abstract screening. Based on the title and abstract, 282 articles were removed, while the remaining 54 were screened by reading the full-text. In the second screening step, 20 articles were eliminated, and the reasons for removal listed (Supplementary Table S4) [44–63]. Finally, 34 articles met all the inclusion criteria and were thus incorporated into the qualitative synthesis [64–97]. Figure 1 shows the selection process. The quality evaluation of the included studies is reported in Supplementary Table S5. Most of the observational studies were judged as high quality. In contrast, the interventional studies show some concerns for risk of bias.

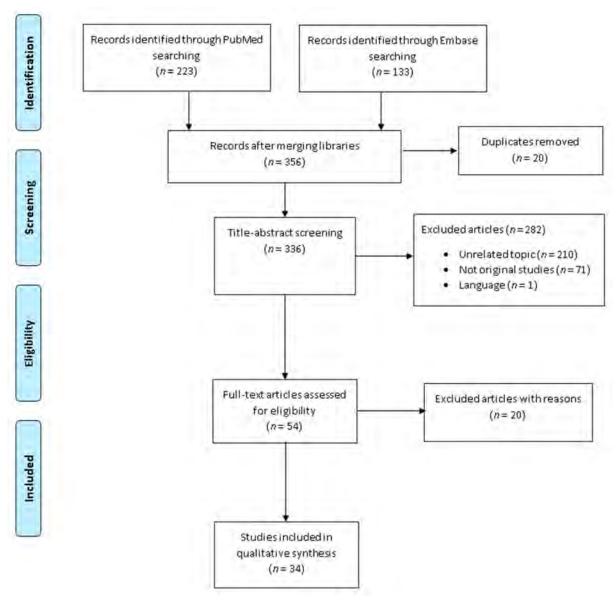


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the selection process.

## 3.2. Characteristics of Included Studies

Overall, the articles' study period spanned 19 years, from 2000 [79] to 2019 [85]. Almost all the included studies (31/34, 91%) were based in a single country. Half of those (19/34, 55%) were set in English-speaking countries (12 United States of America [71–74,77,82,83,88,92–95], four United Kingdom [48,56,58,64], one Canada [75], one Australia [66], one New Zealand [81]). European and Asian countries were involved in 29% (10/34) of the articles (three Lithuania [45,47,67], two Netherlands [96,97], one Denmark [64], one Norway [79], two Japan [85,91], and one South Korea [80]). South America was the least represented continent, with only two studies, which both took place in Colombia [69,86] (Table 1). The remaining three studies were multi-country based. One [70] investigated the association between circadian variation patterns of moderate-vigorous PA and total parks number in 10 countries. A second article explored the relationship between PA's quantity and urban environment features in fourteen OECD countries' cities [90]. Finally, a third study considered mental health indicators measured by the MHI-5 (Mental Health Inventory-5) scale and urban greenspace characteristics in four European cities [89]. As for the study design, 26 were observational; of them, almost all (23/34, 67%) were

cross-sectional [65,67–70,74,75,77–80,83,84,86–90,93,94,96,97]; the remaining were one cohort [66] and two ecological study [81,82]. The other eight studies were experimental, with differences in nature. Five of them were pre-post intervention [44,56,65,71,75], two were randomized [73,92] and the last one was quasi-experimental with only assessment post-intervention [72]. For this reason, the latter was assessed as a cross-sectional study (as reported in Supplementary Table S5). Approximately half of the included studies (14/34, 41%) assessed the health effect of parks and urban meadows (PUM) selectively [45,47,50–56,62,64,65,67,72]; the other eleven studies combined PUM with other types of urban green areas [64,68,69,77,79–81,88,93,94,97] (details in Table 1); three studies assessed the association between recreational and urban gardening facilities (RUGF) and PA [63,66,70]; three studies assessed the impact of small urban greenspaces (SUG) on health outcomes [71,75,76]; one study evaluated the health-related effect of neighbourhood green spaces (NGS) [89], one article assessed the total urban greenspace [66]. One single article did not specify the type of urban greenspace [78].

**Table 1.** Descriptive characteristics of the included studies stratified by health outcome (PA and mental health) and listed in alphabetical order and based on study design.

					Physica	l Activity					
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
					Observatio	onal Studies					
Cerin E., 2017 [70]	2002– 2011	BE, BR, CO, CZ, DK, HK, MX, NZ, UK, US	Cross- sectional	PUM	Ghent, Curitiba, Bogotá, Olomouc, Aarhus, Hong Kong, Cuer- navaca, North Shore, Waitakere, Welling- ton, Christchurch, Stoke-On- Trent, Seattle, Baltimore	6712	Mixed- model regression measures	Accelerometer	PA regardless of the setting	MVPA in urban parks was lower in the late evening/night $(1.2 \pm 4.0 \text{ min/h})$ and higher in the afternoon $(3.0 \pm 4.0 \text{ min/h})$ of weekend days	9
Cohen D.A., 2014 [72]	2006– 2008	US	Quasi- experimental post-only assess- ment	PUM	Los Angeles	n.a.	CEA	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Average visitor number: higher for pocket parks (n = 147) than larger UGS (n = 134). Total PA performed shows opposite trend: 324 vs 374 METs)	8
Cohen D.A., 2017 [74]	2014	US	Cross- sectional	PUM	25 US cities > 100,000 residents each	n.a.	LRM	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Parks with walking loops attract 80% (95% CI: 42–139%) [p < 0.001] more visitors per hour and show increased levels of MVPA with 90% more MET-hours (95% CI: 49–145%) [p < 0.001] than unequipped counterparts	8

 Table 1. Cont.

					Physical	Activity					
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
Copeland J.L., 2017 [75]	2015	CA	Cross- sectional	PUM	Lethbridge	1646	T-test	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Only 2.7% of adult visitors used fitness equipments for PA	5
Parra D.C., 2019 [83]	2018	US	Cross- sectional	RUGF	Wellston	599	Chi <sup>2</sup>	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Children and middle-aged adults represented 41.1% and 50.3% of total park users, respectively. A total of 47% of them practised MVPA, 22% LPA and 30% was sedentary	5
Ramírez P.C., 2017 [86]	2015	СО	Cross- sectional	RUGF	Bucaramanga	6722	Chi <sup>2</sup>	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Women more prone to use outdoor gyms than men (51.7% against 48.3%) and to practise intense PA levels (W = 53.5%; M = 46.5%)	4
Roemmich J.N., 2018 [88]	2014	US	Cross- sectional	PUM, UFAP	Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN	5486	T-test	SOPARC	PA regardless of the setting	Rural parks dwellers display lower MPA prevalence than urban parks (34%, n = 240 against 48%, n = 1828)	9
Sallis J.F., 2016 [90]	2002– 2011	BE, BR, CO, CZ, DK, HK, MX, NZ, UK, US	Cross- sectional	RUGF	Ghent, Curitiba, Bogotá, Olomouc, Aarhus, Hong Kong, Cuer- navaca, North Shore, Waitakere, Welling- ton, Christchurch, Stoke-On- Trent, Seattle, Baltimore	10,008	SEV MEV GAMMs	Accelerometer	PA regardless of the setting	Positive correlation between PA and urban parks presence within 0.5 Km of the participants' home in Ghent (exp[ $\beta$ ] = 1.772; 95% CI: 1.177–2.669; $p$ = 0.006) and Seattle (exp[ $\beta$ ] = 2.064; 95% CI: 1.399–3.045; $p$ < 0.001)	8
Spengler J.O., 2011 [93]	2005	US	Cross- sectional	PUM, SUG, RUGF	Tampa, Chicago	3410	Multilevel regression	SOPLAY	PA in greenspace only	Children perform MVPA most frequently (56.2% boys, 55.7% girls, p-value n.a.) in parks with playgrounds than in all other UGS	6

 Table 1. Cont.

					Physi	ical Activity					
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
Suau L.J., 2012 [94]	2005	US	Cross- sectional	PUM, SUG, RUGF	Tampa, Chicago	9454	Multilevel regression	SOPLAY	PA in greenspace only	In Chicago's parks, PA was greater in African American (F = 5.027; p < 0.01) and high-income neighborhoods (F = 5.027; p = 0.002)	4
Author, year [Ref]	Study period	Country	Study design	Type of greenspace	City	Sample size	Statistical analysis	Tool used to measure PA	Outcome domain	Main results	QS/21
Park S., 2018 [82]	2013– 2015	US	Ecological	PUM	Los Angeles	52,596 MPA, 5975 VPA	Chi <sup>2</sup>	Accelerometer	PA in greenspace only	The proportion of park use time spent in MVPA (33.1%) was lower than the city-level average (35%)	15/21
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Author, year [Ref]	Study period	Country	Study design	Type of greenspace	City	Sample size	Statistical analysis	Tool used to measure PA	Outcome domain	Main results	QS
Andersen H.B., 2017 [64]	2010; 2012 pre and post inter- vention	DK	Pre-post interven- tion	PUM, SUG	Copenhagen	673	Wilcoxon's rank-sum test	Accelerometer, GPS, GIS	PA regardless of the setting	After intervention, 4.5 min/day increase in adolescents' greenspace PA (95% CI: 1.8, 7.2; p < 0.001)	Fair
Cohen D.A., 2013 [71]	2010– 2011	US	Randomized controlled trial	PUM	Albuquerfque Chapel Hill, Colum- bus, Philadel- phia	36,000	LRM	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Programmed activities (IRR: $1.79$ ; $p < 0.001$ ) and the number of activity facilities (IRR: $1.13$ ; $p = 0.01$ ) are associated with higher park use. Programmed activities ( $\beta = 192 \pm 37$ ; $p < 0.001$ ) and number of activity facilities ( $\beta = 28 \pm 27$ ; $p = 0.30$ ) are associated also with higher energy expended in the park too	Some
Cohen D.A., 2017 [73]	2013– 2015	US	Randomized cluster trial	PUM	Los Angeles	52,310	DID models	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Free classes arm attracted more than twice park visits than the frequent user program. (p-value n.a.). (Among free classes arm it was show a 10% increase in total number of park users, more than twice the increasing percentage in frequent user program arm total number (p-value n.a.)	

 Table 1. Cont.

					Phy	sical Activity					
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
Tester J., 2009 [95]	2006– 2007	US	Pre-post interven- tion	SUG	San Francisco	2041	T-test	SOPARC	PA in greenspace only	Significant increase in visitors for PA among children ( $p < 0.05$ ) and adults of both genders ( $p < 0.001$ ) following parks' renovations	
					Me	ental Health					
Author, year [Ref]	Study period	Country	Study design	Type of greenspace	City	Sample size	Statistical analysis	Tool used to measure MH	Outcome domain	Main results	QS/9
					Observ	vational Studi	es				
Andrusaityte S., et al., 2020 [65]	2007– 2009	LT	Cross- sectional	PUM	Kaunas	1489	multivariate logistic regression	SDQ	Well- being/quality of life	Each increasing hour/week of park visits shows a non-significant association with mental difficulties: (aOR = 0.98 (0.96–1.01, [p < 0.05])	4
Astell- Burt T., et al., 2019 [66]	2006– 2015	AU	Cohort	Total greenspace	Sydney, Wollon- gong, and Newcas- tle	4786	multilevel logistic regression	K10	Psychosocial stress	A 30% increase in total greenspace percentage is protective against both prevalent K10 psychological distress (aOR = 0.69 (0.47–1.02) [p = 0.03]) and incident K10 psychological distress (aOR = 0.46 (0.29–0.69) [p < 0.001])	8
Balseviciene B., et al., 2014 [67]	2007– 2009	LT	Cross- sectional	PUM	Kaunas	1468	LRM	SDQ	Well- being/quality of life	Proximity to city parks associated with increased mental difficulties in the lower maternal education subgroup (beta coefficient = 1.293, p < 0.05, R = 0.444).	8
Bixby H., et al., 2015 [68]	2002– 2009	UK	Cross- sectional	PUM, SUG, RUGF, UFAP and BS	50 largest cities in England	5222	Poisson linear regression	Mortality data: ICD-10 codes X60-84	Suicide	Comparing quintiles 1 vs. 5 of greenspace coverage. RR of death from suicide was 1.02 (0.86–1.23) in men and 1.10 (0.77–1.57) in women [p < 0.05 for both].	5

 Table 1. Cont.

					Phy	sical Activ	ity				
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
Camargo D.M., et al., 2017 [69]	2015	СО	Cross- sectional	PUM and SUG	Bucaramanga	1392	Multiple regression	EQ5D-5L	Well- being/quality of life	Positive associations between quality of life and: tree conditions status -> aPR = 1.20 (1.07–1.34), perceived safety -> aPR = 1.22 (1.04–1.44) [p < 0.05 for both]	8
Feda D.M., et al., 2015 [77]	2008– 2010	US	Cross- sectional	PUM, SUG and RUGF	New York and Buffalo	68	Multiple regression analysis	PSS	Psychosocial stress	Percentage of park area predicted perceived stress $\beta = -62.573$ , [ $p < 0.03$ ]	8
Guite H.F., et al., 2006 [78]	n.a.	UK	Cross- sectional	Not specified	Greenwich (London)	2696	mutivariate logistic regression	SF-36v2	Well- being/quality of life	Dissatisfaction with open UGS access significantly associated with lowest quartile for well being and quality of lifeOR = 1.69 (1.05–2.74)	8
Ihlebæk C., et al., 2018 [79]	2000– 2001	NO	Cross- sectional	PUM, RUGF, UFAP, BS	Oslo	8638	Logistic regression	Not validated question- naire	General mental health	With enhanced exposure to UGS, significant drop in MH disorders prevalence in women (-6% p = 0.049) but not in men (-2.5% p = 0.129)	6
Lee H.J., et al., 2019 [80]	2015	KR	Cross- sectional	PUM, SUG, UFAP and BS	7 metropoli- tan areas in Korea	11,408	Binary logistic regression analysis	Not validated question- naire	Depression and Psychosocial stress	Inverse relationship between stress levels, depressive symptoms and urban green area ratio (p < 0.005)	7
Pope, D., et al., 2018 [84]	2009– 2013	UK	Cross- sectional	PUM	Sandwell	1680	Multivariable logistic regression	GHQ-12	Psychological stress	Wider greenspace accessibility associated with reduced PD [OR = 0.13 (0.42, 0.94)]	6
Reklaitiene, R., et al., 2014 [87]	2006– 2008	LT	Cross- sectional	PUM	Kaunas	6944	Multiple logistic regression	CES-D10	Depressive symptoms	Living >300 m away from UGS and using them ≥4 h/week showed higher odds 1.92 (1.11–3.3) and 1.68 (0.81–3.48) of depressive symptoms	6
Ruijsbroek, A., et al., 2017 [89]	2013	ES, NL, LT, UK	Cross- sectional	NGS	Barcelona, Doet- inchem, Kaunas, Stoke-on- Trent	3771	Multilevel regression analyses	MHI-5	Nervous and feelings of depression in the past month	Only in Barcelona, NGS quantity was associated with better MH status (1.437 $\pm$ 0.71) $p$ < 0.05	9

 Table 1. Cont.

					Phy	sical Activity					
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
Van Dillen, S.M., et al., 2012 [96]	2007	NL	Cross- sectional	SUG	80 Dutch urban neighbor- hoods	1641	Multilevel regression	МНІ-5	General mental health	Perceived general health and green areas, had a significant interaction with the following parameters: quantity = 0.27 (0.013), quality = 0.126 (0.066), interaction term = 0.084 (0.040)	5
Zhang, Y., et al., 2015 [97]	2014	NL	Cross- sectional	PUM; SUG	Groningen	223	Multivarite ANOVA	МНІ-5	General mental health	Differences in neighborhood have a positive and significant influenceon mental health, $\beta$ = 0.15, t(245) = 2.10, $p$ < 0.05	5
Author, year [Ref]	Study period	Country	Study design	Type of greenspace	City	Sample size	Statistical analysis	Tool used to measure MH	Outcome domain	Main results	QS/21
Nutsford, D., et al., 2013 [81]	2008– 2009	NZ	Ecological	PUM, SUG, RUGF, UFAP	Auckland City	319,521, of which 7552 cases	Negative binomial regression models	Record linkage (treatment)	Mood state and general anxiety	Better access UGS access, and decreased distance (less than 3km) reduced the risk of anxiety/mood disorders treatment by 4% and 3% respectively (p < 0.01)	12/21
					In	terventions					
Author, year [Ref]	Study period	Country	Study design	Type of greenspace	City	Sample size	Statistical analysis	Tool used to measure MH	Outcome domain	Main results	QS
Coventry P.A., et al., 2019 [76]	2017	UK	Pre-post interven- tion	PUM	York	45	One-way ANOVA + Bonfer- roni correction for multiple compar- isons	SWEMWBS, UWIST- MACL	Affective/general and well- being/quality of life/ stress and (physical) arousal	UWIST-MACL mean difference (pre-post intervention stress levels across all participants at all locations) of -3.53 (4.79-2.28) [p < 0.001]	Fair
Pratiwi, P.I., et al., 2019 [85]	2019	JР	Pre-post interven- tion	PUM	Matsudo	24	Wilcoxon's rank-sum test	POMS-STAI	Mood state and general anxiety	POMS scores: 0.71 in spring and 0.896 in summer. STAI score 0.896 and 0.933 respectively	Fair

Table 1. Cont.

					Phy	sical Activ	ity				
Author, Year [Ref]	Study Period	Country	Study Design	Type of Greenspace	City	Sample Size	Statistical Analysis	Tool Used to Measure PA	Outcome Domain	Main Results	QS/9
Song, C., et al., 2015 [91]	2014	JP	Pre-post interven- tion	SUG	Kashiwa City	20	Wilcoxon's rank-sum test	STAI	Anxiety and mood state	STAI score was 19.3% significantly lower after the urban park walk than after the city area walk (urban park: $39.0 \pm 6.3$ ; city area: $48.4 \pm 7.5$ ; $p < 0.01$ )	Fair
South, E.C., et al., 2018 [92]	2011– 2014	US	Randomized cluster trial	PUM	Philadelphia	149	Pairwise compari- son using time serious regression	<b>K</b> 6	General mental health and depression	ITT analysis of the greening intervention demonstrated a non-significant reduction in overall self-reported poor MH with respect to non-intervention (-62.8%; 95% CI, -86.2% to 0.4%; p = 0.051) but a significant reduction in depressive symptoms (-41.5%; 95%CI, -63.6% to -5.9%; p = 0.03)	Low

AU: Australia; BE: Belgium; BR: Brazil; BS: "Blue" spaces; CA: Canada; CEA: Cost-effectiveness analysis; CES-D10: Center for the Epidemiological Studies of Depression Short Form 10-items; CI: Confidence Interval; CO: Colombia; CZ: Czech Republic; DID: Differencein-differences; DK: Denmark; EQ5D-5L: EuroQol 5 Dimensions-5 Levels; ES: Spain; F: Fisher's F-test distribution; GAMM: Generalized Additive Mixed Models; GHQ-12: General Health Questionnaire-12; GIS: Geographic Information Systems; GPS: Global Positioning Systems; Exp: Expected; HK: Hong Kong; ICD-10: International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10; IRR: Incidence Rate Ratio; ITT: intention-to-treat JP: Japan; K6: Kessler-6-Psychological Distress Scale; K10: Kessler Psychological Distress Scale; KR: Korea; LRM: Linear regression model; LT: Lithuania; M: Men; METS: Metabolic Equivalents; MEV: Multiple Environmental Variable; MH: mental health; MHI-5: The Revised Mental Health Inventory-5; MN: Minnesota; MPA: Moderate-intensity Physical Activity; MVPA: Moderate/Vigorous Physical Activity; MX: Mexico; N: Number; ND: North Dakota; NL: Netherlands; NZ: New Zealand; OR: Odds Ratio; PA: Physical Activity; POMS-STAI: Profile of Mood States—State Trait Anxiety Inventory; PSS: Perceived Stress Scale; PUM: Parks and urban meadows; QS: Quality Score; RR: Relative Risk; RUGF: Recreational and urban gardening facilities; SDQ: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; SEV: Single Environmental variable; SF-36v2: SF36 subscales for mental health; SOPARC: System of Observing Play and Recreation in Communities; SOPLAY: System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth; STAI: State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; SUG: "small" urban greenspaces; SWEMWBS: Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental-Wellbeing Scale; UFAP: Urban forests and agricultural parks; UGS: urban greenspace; UK: United Kingdom; US: United States; UWIST-MACL: Measured by the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology - Mood Adjective Checklist; VPA: Vigorous Physical Activity; W: Women; aPR: adjusted Prevalence Ratio; aOR: adjusted Odds Ratio; n.a.: not available; β: β coefficient.

### 3.3. Tools Used to Assess Health Outcomes

PA outcomes were analysed by 15 articles [64,70–75,82,83,86,88,90,93–95] (Figure 2). The majority of those studies (11/15, 61%), dealt specifically with urban greenspace-based PA [71–75,82,83,86,93–95]. In contrast, a third of them (4/15, 33%) reported overall data about the total amount of PA practised, regardless of the setting [44,50,68,70]. To objectively measure PA, the majority of the studies used some kind of video recording system. In more detail, nine used the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) [51–55,63,66,68,75], two used the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Young (SOPLAY) [93,94], whereas four studies used the accelerometer, alone [50,62,70] or in combination with GPS and GIS [64].

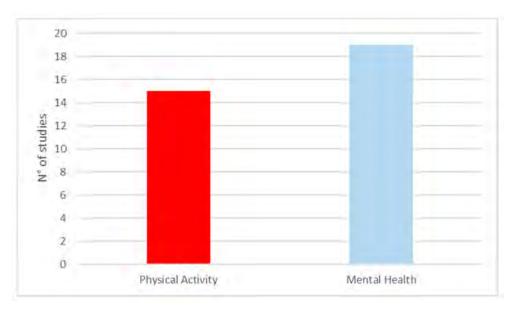


Figure 2. Number of articles stratified by health outcome (Physical Activity (PA) or Mental Health (MH)).

MH outcomes were considered by 19 records [65–69,76–81,84,85,87,89,91,92,96,97] all of which seem to adopt a unified analytic approach. Indeed, they evaluate multiple MH domains in parallel. Public MH research has clearly demonstrated high prevalence rates of comorbidity in people living with MH disorders [98]. In community surveys of the general population, findings of several areas of psychologic dysfunction or self-perceived discomfort are common [99]. Well-being and quality of life were the most frequently assessed MH outcomes (5/19, 26%) [45,47,49,56,58], followed by depression (3/19, 16%) [60,67,69], stress (4/19, 23.5%) [46,57,60,64], general mental health (4/19, 23.5%) [59,72,76,77], anxiety and mood state (3/19, 16%) [61,65,71], and suicide [68]. The total number of MH outcomes assessed is higher than the total included studies, because most of them assessed more than one outcome at once. All the MH dimensions were assessed by specific psychometric scales, often validated by the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) [100]. Two studies analysed MH outcomes by an unvalidated questionnaire [79,80], a record linkage [81], and another one with purely epidemiologic methods [68]. In the latter, authors used a Poisson linear regression model to describe the relationship between cause-specific mortality rates for suicide in the general population and 50 English cities' greenspace coverage [68].

## 3.4. Greenspace and Physical Activity

Across all the included studies, a positive association was found between urban greenspaces exposure and PA levels. Main predictors of enhanced PA were: presence of urban greenspaces in a 0.5 to 1 km radius from the subjects' homes [90], total number of urban greenspace in the neighborhood, and their accessibility through public transport [70]. In a study analyzing circadian variations in PA patterns, PA levels peaked in the afternoon (2 to 5 p.m.) and where much lower in the evening and night [70]. Urban greenspaces with playgrounds are effective enablers of increased PA intensity in children [93]. However, this urban greenspace feature displayed poorer results in more deprived city neighborhoods [93,94]. Globally, rural [88] and low-income neighborhoods had diminished use rates [82]—even more when disaggregating data by sex, with women being the less frequent users [72]. Interestingly, the same 2014 study highlighting different rates of women users also found an inverse relationship between park size, visitors and PA intensity. On average, pocket parks had higher visitors, but less reported PA intensity than broader-sized urban greenspaces [72].

One study concluded that exercise facilities and related amenities in urban greenspaces promote PA across demographics, especially in women [86]. Besides providing public

access to [83] and ensuring regular maintenance [95] of urban greenspaces, the total number and variety of working equipment [75], and scheduled plans for sports activities are other aspects that need to be factored in [71].

A randomized study with four arms as follows: arm (1) free PA classes; arm (2) a prize contest based on the number of park visits; arm (3) interventions of arms 1 and 2, combined; arm (4) no intervention; showed that the most significant increase in PA was reached in arms 1 and 2 [73]. Walking loops proved effective in boosting PA levels and incrementing the total number of urban greenspace visitors [74]. Two studies investigated the effects of urban greenspace renewals on citizenship perception, engagement and use. The first article's setting were low-income neighborhoods in San Francisco (USA) [95]. The scholars proved that, after renovations were carried out in two urban greenspaces, the average number of adult users increased between four and nine times. A 2017 Danish study presented a project of integrated urban rebuilding. Four new UGSs were created in a low-income area in Copenhagen [64]. The authors report an increase in the average daily time spent by adolescents in practising PA (+4.5 min/day, p < 0.05) [64].

## 3.5. Greenspace and Mental Health

Only three out of the 19 included MH-related articles did not find a statistically significant association between the urban greenspace and mental health. A study comparing greenspace coverage to the cause-specific mortality rates for suicide in England (between 2002 and 2009) reported no association between increasing quintiles of greenspace coverage and age-standardized mortality risk ratios for suicide [68]. Similarly, no statistically significant association was found between urban greenspace use in all (four) European cities, except for Barcelona, where living in 'greener' spaces was associated with higher Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) scale scores [89]. Lastly, Ihlebaek et al. did not find a statistical association between MH disorders and urban greenspace exposure in men, but only in women in a border-line inverse association [79].

All the remaining included studies found a positive association between urban greenspace exposure and MH. Specifically, four studies considered psychosocial stress, alone [77] or in combination with other mental health outcomes [80], both in adolescents and adults. The main predictors of lower-level stress were a higher number of urban greenspaces and easier accessibility, higher tree density, and the possibility of performing leisure activities (both physical and intellectual). In particular, higher number and easier accessibility were associated with lower levels of stress in both adolescents (in Buffalo and New York) [77], and elderly (over 65 years old) [80]. The latter also benefited from a lower level of depression [80]. A cohort study showed that higher tree density in the neighbourhood was associated with a lesser degree of psychological distress among adults (Australia) [66]. Lastly, two studies carried out a separate analysis of different activities performed in urban greenspace to disentangle their relative contributions to mental wellbeing and distress [76,84]. In a first article, people going to urban greenspace to perform leisurely activities experienced significantly lower psychological distress than their nonurban greenspace dweller counterparts [84]. In a second study by Coventry and colleagues, various intellectual and motor activities proved effective in reducing stress levels in the exposed subgroup [76].

One study was specifically focused on depressive symptoms [87], while the other assessed both general mental health and depression. The first one was a Lithuanian study that indicated an inverse relationship between individual-level depressive symptoms and residential distance from urban greenspaces, which was more marked in women [87]. The second, was a USA article exploring the effect of a social gardening program performed in vacant urban greenspaces located in neighbourhoods with average income levels below the poverty threshold. There were significantly lower depressive symptoms after exposure [92], but failed to demonstrate a significant improvement of the general mental health. On the contrary, the other two studies assessing the impact of urban greenspace on general mental

health found a positive association between higher number and easier accessibility of urban greenspace among adults, in the Netherlands [96,97].

Four studies dealt with mental well-being/quality of life in adults and children. The two analysing the paediatric population showed how lower urban greenspace attendance rates were associated with increased risk of MH issues [65], where lower maternal education level represents an additional risk factor [67]. A third study based in England was conducted in a sample of adults. The authors showed that a lack of urban greenspace access was significantly associated with worse mental well-being [78]. One study conducted in Colombia considered the effect of urban greenspace on quality of life metrics [69]. Urban greenspace accessibility, maintenance status, and perceived security were associated with higher quality of life metrics and lower anxiety and depression levels.

Three studies explored urban greenspace' effect on anxiety. Song and co-authors [91] measured anxiety-related symptoms in two groups of citizens after 15 min of walking in urban greenspaces, as opposed to urban built environments. In the second study, anxiety levels dropped after the subjects were exposed to natural landscapes [85]. In an ecological study, anxiety decreased for reduced urban greenspace distance [81].

#### 4. Discussion

The current systematic review has identified a total of 34 studies. Of those, 15 investigated the effect of urban greenspace exposure on PA and 19 on MH. Specifically, only a small fraction of these demonstrated a non-effect or a negative impact on MH outcomes. On the contrary, the majority reported a beneficial effect on different MH aspects, such as levels of self-perceived stress, depressive symptoms and perceived mental well-being. The same results were reached for PA. All the studies showed that exposure to urban greenspaces increased PA. However, what emerged is that both health outcomes improved substantially with the exposure to well-kept urban greenspaces. Maintenance has also proven to be a therapeutic activity for people with MH issues. In this perspective, the study by South et al. [92] highlighted how users' involvement in abandoned urban greenspaces' renewal and maintenance, particularly in economically deprived settings, can act as a surrogate mood-stabilizing therapy for people with depressive disorders. Many recent pieces of evidence are coherent with our results, identifying green space as an important factor impacting on both physical and mental health [101-103]. In particular, Wendelboe-Nelson et al. stressed the importance of incorporating green space during city planning and in public health policies, especially considering the world's growing urban population [101].

Emotional well-being is an essential aspect of overall health. Among young people, emotional well-being helps develop intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, with a long-term influence on health trajectories, both in adulthood and later life stages [104]. Its absence causes physical and MH problems. Due to the growing burden of mental disorders in children and adults, the WHO has called on increasing knowledge levels of emotional well-being determinants [105–107]. The complex and articulated relationship linking urban greenspaces, emotional well-being, and health benefits involve individual characteristics and social and physical environments' features [108,109]. Actually, even the paucity of the literature, Wendelboe-Nelson et al. in their work found that green spaces may affect health in different ways and with different benefits based on population's characteristics (e.g., socio-economic status, age, and sex) [101]. However, as confirmed by Lee et al., evidence is limited, especially in understanding the amount of urban green space exposure and the related beneficial effects [102]. Moreover, heterogeneous results have been found on how users' characteristics might impact on urban green space usability and consequently on the health benefits.

Many theories have been proposed to explain the association between greenspace exposure and health gains. The first hypothesis is that greenspace exposure may represent an opportunity for PA. PA is widely recognized as one of the most important protective factors of many NCDs [110], including cardiovascular diseases [111], hypertension [112],

diabetes [113], obesity [114], mental disorders [32], and cancers [115,116]. However, according to some studies, higher health gains could be reached with outdoors, rather than indoors, PA. Outdoor PA allows for enhanced sunlight exposure, thereby facilitating vitamin D synthesis. Vitamin D is a lipid-soluble molecule acting as a hormone [16]. Among its many biological functions, vitamin D helps regulate calcium metabolism and exerts an immune-modulating and anti-inflammatory effect. Vitamin D deficiency has been associated with a wide range of immune-mediated diseases, such as diabetes, ischemic heart disease, Alzheimer's, asthma and multiple sclerosis. Another hypothesis postulates that greenspace attendance increases social interactions and improves subjective well-being [117]. The fourth is the renowned "old friends hypothesis" [118]. The higher prevalence rates of allergies and immune-mediated disorders might be traced back to reduced stimuli by antigens and microbes, caused by reduced contact with the biodiversity-rich natural environments. This would imply that, on the contrary, increased exposure to natural habitats, and consequently to microbial biodiversity, determines a protective effect against infections and immune disorders.

Greenspaces can also influence social capital by providing a meeting place for users to develop and maintain neighbourhood social bonds [23,119]. Social interactions improve communication skills [120,121], thereby strengthening neighbourhoods' social bonds, which dramatically affects perceived safety [120]. Policymaking efforts should be directed at tackling inequities in urban greenspaces access [122]. In addition to decreasing inequalities in terms of accessibility to green areas, it is necessary to incentivize the increase and improvement of characteristics such as the capillarity (through urban regeneration and greening of the available flat roofs) and the continuity of the green infrastructures, as well as the promotion of public-private collaboration in the maintenance of green areas in order to better involve the population and citizenship, with positive indirect mental health outcomes. Previous studies have shown how the main predictors of urban greenspaces use are quality and maintenance [44,72,75,102,103]. Low-income neighbourhoods are often underprivileged in terms of natural resources; even though urban greenspace might be present, they are often deteriorated and poorly maintained, with vandalized or dangerous areas [82]. In the early 2000s, scholars coined the term "environmental justice" [123] to illustrate spatial models where socioeconomic and environmental deprivation coexisted. Further research has shown how a lack of contact with restorative natural resources (such as urban greenspaces) is a social determinant of health inequities, especially in vulnerable, economically disadvantages subgroups [124]. Alongside the need for basic access to healthcare services, access to green environments is crucial for social justice. In this perspective, public greenspaces should be considered essential public health resources [101,106,107].

Our review underscores that mere urban greenspace presence is not enough to secure the desired health outcomes. On the contrary, important elements that need to be considered and reinvigorated are maintenance, access, and perceived security aspects. A pervasive determinant of both MH and PA-related health gains was the degree to which concrete, interactive activities were planned and disseminated to the general population. From this perspective, our results are significant for public health experts and policymakers involved in urban planning, community health promotion, and improvement of health and social equity [125]. Lastly, our results are consistent with previous and recent reviews [101–103], despite the fact that the review methodology and inclusion/exclusion criteria were different. For instance, a scoping review approach was used, in contrast with our systematic search. Moreover, we only included scientific literature, whereas another study also included grey literature [103]. Another difference is the geographical filter adopted. Indeed, in our study, we included general population living in the OECD area; on the contrary, Callaghan et al. [103] conducted a European-based review, while Lee et al. [102] and Wendelboe-Nelson et al. [101] did not apply geographical restrictions. Moreover, previous reviews generically referred to green space exposure, without focusing on urban green space, as in the current systematic review. Another different criterion used was the time filter. In particular, we restricted our search to articles published after 2000, whilst Callaghan [103] included studies until 2019. Whereas, since Wendelboe et al. [101] published their study in 2011, they could not include the last decade, and Lee et al. [102] which considers studies from 1990. Moreover, all the previous researches only focused on mental health/well-being; on the contrary, we included both physical activity and mental health (using several potential outcomes, such as, for instance, well-being, anxiety, stress, and etc.). Lastly, even if previous reviews searched in many electronic databases, the final number of included studies did not dramatically change, and more importantly, no differences in data interpretation have been detected.

## Strengths and Limitations

However, some limitations to our results generalization and external validity need to be acknowledged. Firstly, this was a systematic review, which was limited to only two databases. Nevertheless, the assessment of two databases is in line with the minimum requirements set by the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews. Secondly, we limited our search to articles published in English. However, since only one article was removed because of this language limitation, that in any case was not relevant to our topic, we are confident that our results are not affected by selection bias. Thirdly, in most of the cases, the authors used a cross-sectional or a before-after design, limiting the interpretability of the results. Moreover, the use of a cross-sectional design did not exclude reverse causality. Fourthly, the methodological quality of the included studies was below the cut-off for high quality. It was particularly true for interventional studies. Lastly, high heterogeneity was detected in both study design, outcome identification and outcome measures. MH outcomes were often grouped into macro-domains, such as depressive symptoms, anxiety levels, psychosocial stress, and even elusive categories, such as "perceived well-being". The same degree of heterogeneity permeated the chosen psychometric scales. As for PA, although the results were often operationalized as METS (metabolic equivalents), there was heterogeneity in the tools used to derive such measures (accelerometers, SOPARC and others). However, our study also has important strengths. It is a systematic review that assessed more than 300 papers retrieved in two databases. Furthermore, our search was not restricted to only one outcome. Indeed, we reviewed articles establishing associations between several mental and physical health domains. Lastly, despite the weaknesses of the included studies, the results were coherent in retrieving the beneficial effects of urban green spaces and health (both physical activity and mental health).

### 5. Conclusions

Despite the above-mentioned limitations inherent to the current systematic review, we can state that the different studies identified have shown an almost univocal potential beneficial effect of urban greenspaces. Such an impact is to be ascribed, at least partially, to a complex relationship mediated by different personal and environmental factors. Nevertheless, such results need to be tailored to specific contexts, population characteristics, and the level of maintenance, accessibility and perceived security of individual urban greenspaces. Future research should help reduce the high methodological heterogeneity, and the use of validated tools should be encouraged. Importantly, urban greenspaces exposure should be measured more accurately by future research. According to what is suggested and encouraged by the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding the "urban green spaces and health" issues, both green areas and the exposure to it should be deeply analyzed, through specific indicators. Those indicators, for instance, could be related to: (i) indicators of green space availability (i.e., density and diversity of trees or percentage of green space by area, using also GIS-based data); (ii) indicators of green space accessibility (proximity to an urban park or proportion of green space from residence, using also GIS-based data); (iii) indicators of green space usage (community-based survey about both frequency of attendance, and time and methods of the green areas' use and accessibility, different for types of users, or using global positioning system technology, or digital gate count).

Indeed, almost all the included studies took indirect indexes, such as residential closeness, as a proxy indicator of urban greenspaces exposure. All these elements can improve comparability and reduce uncertainty. In this respect, joining research efforts into consortia or multicentric studies is a plausible solution.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at <a href="https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/ijerph18105137/s1">https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/ijerph18105137/s1</a>, Table S1: Detailed search strategy, Table S2: Definitions of urban greenspaces used, Table S3: Detailed description of inclusion/exclusion criteria according to a Population, Exposure, Outcomes and Study design (PEOS), Table S4: Articles assessed in full and excluded with reasons, Table S5: Quality assessment of the included studies, in alphabetical order and stratified by study design.

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# Improve Public Health

## **Executive Summary**

People value the time they spend in city parks, whether walking a dog, playing basketball, or having a picnic. Along with these expected leisure amenities, parks can also provide measurable health benefits, from providing direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment, to opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. A telephone survey conducted for the American Public Health Association found that 75 percent of adults believe parks and recreation must play an important role in addressing America's obesity crisis.

Because of the different ways people experience parks, cities need to provide all types, from neighborhood facilities to large natural areas. In fact, many of the health benefits described below can be best achieved through small-scale, readily accessible sites. A full reckoning of the benefits of parks will better inform public policy about parks and provide a useful public health tool.

## Key Point #1

Parks provide people with contact with nature, known to confer certain health benefits and enhance well-being.

## **Key Point #2**

Physical activity opportunities in parks help to increase fitness and reduce obesity.

## **Key Point #3**

Parks resources can mitigate climate, air, and water pollution impacts on public health.

## **Key Point #4**

Cities need to provide all types of parks, to provide their various citizen groups with a range of health benefits.

## Public Health Benefits

## **KEY POINT #1:**

## Parks provide people with contact with nature, known to confer certain health benefits and enhance well-being.

Harvard University professor Edward O. Wilson, Ph. D., argues in his book *Biophilia* that human beings have a genetic tendency to seek connections with other living things. In *The Diversity of Life* he observes that the "favored living place of most peoples is a prominence near water from which parkland can be viewed," and that "in the U.S. and Canada, more people visit zoos and aquariums than attend all professional athletic events combined."

Health studies have shown that contact with nature—with plants, with animals, with pleasing landscapes, and with wilderness—offers a range of medical benefits. These include lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, enhanced survival after a heart attack, more rapid recovery from surgery, fewer minor medical complaints, and lower self-reported stress. In children with attention disorders and in teens with behavioral disorders, contact with nature has resulted in significant improvement (Frumkin, 2001).

In fact, recent research suggests that exercise is more beneficial—leading to enhanced tranquility, and more relief of anxiety and depression—when it occurs in natural settings, like parks, rather than along urban streets (Bodin and Hartig, 2003). The opportunity for so-called "green exercise" is an important asset that city parks offer.

## **KEY POINT #2:**

Physical activity opportunities in parks help to increase fitness and reduce obesity.

Overweight and obesity are epidemic problems across the country, and related conditions such as diabetes are on the rise. Scientists attribute these worrisome trends to two factors: more calories consumed, and fewer calories burned. A primary focus of attention is providing environments where people can be physically active. Parks offer such an opportunity.

The findings of a study of park use by older adults in **Cleveland**, published in *P&R* magazine, include:

- Active park users were less likely to be overweight than those who had longer park visits and either used the park for passive activities or did not use the park at all;
- Active park use was negatively related to visits to a physician other than routine checkups; and
- The level of physical activity was the strongest predictor of lower blood pressure.

A study in the October 2000 issue of *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* found that physically active individuals had lower annual direct medical costs than did inactive people. The cost difference was \$330 per person, based on 1987 dollars. If all inactive American adults became physically active, the potential savings could be \$29.2 billion in 1987 dollars, or \$76.6 billion in 2000 dollars.

Certain features predict greater use for physical activity. These include accessibility, proximity, good lighting, toilets and drinking water, and well-designed and well-maintained paths, as well as attractive scenery (Frumkin, 2003).

## Public Health Benefits

## **KEY POINT #3:**

# Parks resources can mitigate climate, air, and water pollution impacts on public health.

Climate. The dark surfaces of rooftops, roadways, and parking lots in urban areas absorb the day's heat and radiate it at night. As a result, cities cool less at night than surrounding suburban areas, and remain hotter during the days. This urban heat island effect is a significant public health risk, as more people die in hot spells in summer than all other weather events in the U.S. combined. (Changnon, 1996). The lack of shade and evapotranspiration from plants contributes to the problem. According to the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture, a mature tree canopy "reduces air temperature by about five to ten degrees."

**Air.** The trees in parks also help improve air quality by removing pollutants from the atmosphere. Since urban neighborhoods have especially high concentrations of pollutants related to traffic, boilers, generators, and other sources, trees are especially important to filter the air. An Urban Ecosystem Analysis conducted by American Forests revealed that in **Atlanta**, trees remove 19 million pounds of pollutants each year, providing a service valued at \$47 million.

Cleaner air offers important health benefits. Ozone threatens the health of children, the elderly, and people with asthma and other respiratory diseases. Particulate matter actually increases mortality in polluted cities, especially affecting people with underlying heart and lung disease. Toxic air pollutants increase the risk of cancer. Therefore, trees offer a wide range of health benefits by cleaning the air.

Water. New York City began purchasing land in upstate New York more than 150 years ago, and now satisfies its vast need for clean water from three watersheds, the Croton, Catskill, and Delaware, with a combined area of more than 2,000 square miles. This strategy—protecting source water—has saved the city billions of dollars in water treatment costs, according to a World Bank study, and has avoided countless cases of water-borne disease.

States and communities across the U.S. are purchasing open space in the watersheds that feed the water resources that provide hundreds of millions of people their drinking water each day. Public agencies in San Antonio have protected thousands of acres of open space to ensure that the Edwards Aquifer recharge zones are not developed. Failure to do so could have contaminated the drinking water for more than a million of the city's residents.

Parks along urban waterways, such as **Philadelphia's** Wissahickon Park or **Washington, D.C.'s** Rock Creek Park, help keep water clean by absorbing and cleansing the polluted run-off from impervious surfaces before it reaches the water. These parks also reduce stream erosion by maintaining steady flow volumes through the slow release of absorbed run-off.

## **KEY POINT #4:**

# Cities need to provide all types of parks, to provide their various citizen groups with a range of health benefits.

Different kinds of parks may differ in the health benefits they offer. A neighborhood park may function as a venue for social interaction, physical activity, and nature contact. Larger parks may offer these same benefits and some additional ones, such as cooling and cleaning of urban air, and protection of source water.

It is critical that a parks system provide a variety of functions because different groups of people have different health needs. People from different age, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups may have different traditions in physical activity and attitudes towards natural settings. For people who are economically disadvantaged, parks are an affordable means to healthy activities.

Play Across **Boston**, a project of the Harvard Prevention Research Center, concluded that in addition to organized league sports, it was important to provide open recreation to provide opportunities for youth to try different sports and for non-athletes to be active (Gortmaker, 2002).

On the other end of the age spectrum, researchers at the Tokyo Medical and Dental University monitored the longevity of more than 3,000 people born between 1903 and 1918 and living in Tokyo, one of the most densely populated cities in the world. The results of the study, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, showed that proximity to public parks and tree-lined streets appeared to have the greatest impact on the length of pensioners' lives, even when taking into account factors known to affect longevity, such as gender, marital status, income, and age.

Ethnic groups also differ in their preferences. Race and ethnicity have been associated with choice of parks and with types of activities engaged in by park users (Hutchinson, 1987; Dwyer and Gobster, 1997; Tinsley et al., 2002). These differences may relate in part to park amenities; for example, Dwyer and Gobster (1997) found that African-Americans were more likely to use facility-based urban recreational parks while whites were more likely to use wildland parks for such activities as camping and hiking. A study of **Chicago's** Lincoln Park found that Asians, Latinos, blacks, and whites all valued certain park attributes, such as the lake, ponds, and zoo. However, the natural environment was the most frequently mentioned favorable attribute among

## Public Health Benefits

Asians, Latinos, and whites, while cultural facilities were most favored among blacks (Gobster, 2002). In this study, whites exhibited higher participation rates in active individual pursuits, such as biking, walking and jogging in the park, while black, Latino, and Asian park users exhibited higher participation rates in passive activities such as sitting and relaxing. Asians and Latinos participated more heavily in group social activities such as picnicking (Gobster, 2002). Another study comparing black and white park users, also found a stronger preference among whites for such activities as swimming and hiking (Floyd et al., 1999).

The 1994-1995 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment compiled trends in outdoor activities across age, sex, race, income, education, car ownership, and size of residence. While some activities, such as walking and family gathering, had high participation rates across most population segments, others did not. For instance, boating and golf activity rates were clearly tied to income levels, while outdoor team sports participation was linked to age. Equally diverse were the barriers to participation identified by those who do not engage in active outdoor recreational activities. Even as these type of national surveys are helpful, a local approach to identifying residents' needs is important to providing the most effective opportunities for health-enhancing park activities (Cordell, 1999).

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This briefing paper was co-authored by Howard Frumkin, MD, DrPH, Professor and Chair of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, and Mary E. Eysenbach, Director of The City Parks Forum.

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# Create Safer Neighborhoods

## **Executive Summary**

For those concerned that green spaces may foster crime and illegal activity, evidence now exists that the opposite may be true. When adjacent to residential areas, green spaces have been shown to create neighborhoods with fewer violent and property crimes and where neighbors tend to support and protect one another. These are the findings of scientists at the Human-Environment Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who studied green space alongside public housing in Chicago. Other researchers who are conducting similar studies across the country are finding similar results.

The factors that explain these findings emphasize the importance of greenery in community and personal wellness. Time spent in natural surroundings relieves mental fatigue, which in turn relieves inattentiveness, irritability, and impulsivity, recognized by psychologists as precursors to violence. Green spaces also support frequent, casual contact among neighbors. This leads to the formation of neighborhood social ties, the building blocks of strong, secure neighborhoods where people tend to support, care about, and protect one another.

## **Key Point #1**

Time spent in nature immediately adjacent to home helps people to relieve mental fatigue, reducing aggression.

## **Key Point #2**

Green residential spaces are gathering places where neighbors form social ties that produce stronger, safer neighborhoods.

## **Key Point #3**

Barren spaces are more frightening to people and are more crime prone than parks landscaped with greenery and open vistas.

## **Key Point #4**

In order to make the best use of greenery and open space, it must be positively incorporated into a community's design.

## Create Safer Neighborhoods

## **KEY POINT #1:**

# Time spent in nature immediately adjacent to home helps people to relieve mental fatigue, reducing aggression.

The University of Illinois scientists have concluded that park-like surroundings increase neighborhood safety by relieving mental fatigue and feelings of violence and aggression that can occur as an outcome of fatigue. The three classic symptoms of mental fatigue are inattentiveness, irritability, and poor impulse control, each of which has been previously linked to aggression.

Time spent in nature relieves mental fatigue specifically by restoring directed attention capacity, which is the ability to concentrate and pay focused, effortful attention. Like a muscle, directed attention capacity fatigues with exertion (such as through working, studying, or driving in traffic) and recovers with rest. The sights and sounds of nature absorb individuals effortlessly, during which time concentration rests and renews.

In a study recently published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology, researchers looked at stress recovery and directed attention restoration in a group of young adults. Each subject was given an attentionally demanding task (driving to an unfamiliar site). Upon their arrival, subjects were split into two groups, with one group sitting in a room with tree views followed by a walk in a nature reserve, and the other group sitting in a viewless room and walking in an urban setting. Performance on an attentional test improved for the nature group. In addition, subjects in the nature group reported less anger and greater positive affect following the nature walk; the urban group had the opposite results.

When concentration is restored, so is the ability and willingness to handle tasks and problems thoughtfully and calmly. With convenient access to spaces that relieve mental fatigue and foster mental restoration, families and communities may become safer.

## **KEY POINT #2:**

Green residential spaces are gathering places where neighbors form social ties that produce stronger, safer neighborhoods.

The University of Illinois researchers found that residents who live near outdoor greenery are more familiar with their nearby neighbors, socialized more with them, and expressed greater feelings of community and safety than did residents lacking nearby green spaces. Shade trees figured importantly in the use of outdoor spaces. The more trees existed in a space, the more heavily the space was used by people of all ages.

Green spaces are settings for frequent, informal interaction among neighbors that nurtures the formation of neighborhood social ties. Research has shown that these ties are the glue that transforms a collection of unrelated neighbors into a neighborhood. They are the heart of a neighborhood's strength. When ties are weak, people feel isolated and unsupported. When ties are strong, people feel empowered to help and protect each other:

The value of green space in prompting the formation of neighborhood ties is exemplified by redevelopment that occurred in the historic East Falls section of **Philadelphia** in the 1990s. The area surrounding the Chelsea apartments was converted from a scene dominated by factories and warehouses to a residential neighborhood replete with modest yet welcoming green spaces that gave residents a place in which to socialize (Rodriguez, 1996). Referring to the green space one resident said, "It's nice because often in an apartment community people don't have an opportunity to meet each other. The park gives us an outdoor area to enjoy together. It's really used a lot."

Another vital green space within this community was converted from a driveway to a series of patios shaded by pear and birch trees. The patios lie between two buildings that were converted to townhouses. The space succeeds so well as a social catalyst that residents call it the Melrose walkway after the TV soap opera, Melrose Place (Rodriguez, 1996).

The conspicuous presence of people outdoors contributes further to safety by increasing surveillance, which discourages criminals. More people outdoors means that threatening behavior is more likely to be observed. At the same time, potential criminals are deterred by the sense that they are being noticed and watched.

## Create Safer Neighborhoods

## **KEY POINT #3:**

## Barren spaces are more frightening to people and are more crime prone than parks landscaped with greenery and open vistas.

Some community leaders are inhibited from proposing new parks or supporting existing ones out of concern that parks can be settings for crime and illegal activity. However, when properly planned, parks and greenways adjacent to residential areas may help to shield against crime.

The University of Illinois researchers tested the conventional wisdom that, in the inner city, barren spaces are safer than spaces with trees and greenery that could hide illicit activity. The study compared crime rates for inner-city apartment buildings with varying amounts of vegetation and found that the greener the surroundings, the fewer crimes occurred against people and property.

The scientists compared crime rates for apartment buildings with little or no vegetation to buildings with high levels of vegetation. They found that roughly half as many crimes (48 percent fewer property crimes and 56 percent fewer violent crimes) were reported in buildings with high amounts of vegetation. In addition, buildings with medium amounts of vegetation had 42 percent fewer total crimes (40 percent fewer property crimes and 44 percent fewer violent crimes) than did buildings with low levels of vegetation. Far from shielding criminals, nearby vegetation seems to shield against them.

These findings were consistent with prior studies that found that urban residents who live in green surroundings experience fewer quality-of-life crimes such as littering and graffiti, and fewer incivilities, such as noisy or disruptive neighbors. In other studies, people reported feeling safer in residential areas that contained greenery.

In **Providence, Rhode Island**, through the early 1990s city officials launched a tree-planting program that converted barren, unused open spaces into treed oases. As a result of their efforts, a number of the oases became gathering points for neighborhood recreational and social functions (Davis, 1992).

Researchers in **Austin, Texas**, used a geographic information system (GIS) to determine if there was a relationship between the greenness of various neighborhoods and their crime levels. They found that areas with less than the average amount of greenness had more crime. (aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/syllabi/435/article.doc)

## **KEY POINT #4:**

## In order to make the best use of greenery and open space, it must be positively incorporated into a community's design.

New parks and open space should be developed within residential developments so that nature is close to home. It is critical that these spaces are carefully designed to support the activities for which they were intended; that requires that each space have an intended purpose. If the purpose of the space is to promote social interaction, it should be located where frequent, casual encounters by neighbors are likely to occur. In addition, shade trees are proven attractants for neighbors to mingle and form social ties.

If the intention of the park or open space is to promote restoration, areas that can be left green and pervious will help people relax and will reduce feelings that lead to aggression. While law enforcement officials have historically recommended removing vegetation to eliminate cover for criminal activity, vegetation that maintains visibility actually fosters feelings of safety. Widely spaced high-canopy trees, grass, flowers, and low-growing shrubs do not block views, and allow the user to become oriented to the setting. This understanding of one's surroundings is important in that letting down one's guard and becoming absorbed in the natural environment promotes restoration (Kaplan, 1998).

Where parks already exist, their maintenance is critical. A well-maintained park or open space sends a message that someone cares about it. In turn, the message that someone cares about the park helps create a perception of safety. The greater the perception of safety, the more likely the park will be used. In addition, maintenance programs that include participation by the users help establish a sense of ownership and promote stewardship of the space.

It is also critical that the community be included in planning and programming the open space. In Macon, Georgia, Mayor C. Jack Ellis, the Village Green community, and Village Hope, a nonprofit organization, worked together to use a CPF grant to revive the Village Green park as a crime prevention activity. The addition of a picnic shelter, tables, and grills, a new playground unit, new basketball goals, and park beautification efforts have increased park use by more than 25 percent. In addition, the parks and recreation department, along with the police athletic league, are sponsoring athletic programs in the park. Neighborhood watch groups are coordinating programs with the police precinct assigned to Village Green, and citizens are volunteering their time at the precinct to answer phones and do other needed tasks. Citizens now care more about their neighborhood, and incidents of crime or violence have dropped by more than 50 percent!

## Create Safer Neighborhoods

#### Resources

Along with the citations below, data for this briefing paper were drawn from the Coping with Poverty archive, a multi-study research project examining the effects of the physical environment on the functioning of individuals, families, and communities residing in urban public housing.

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## Of Special Note

All referenced University of Illinois studies were conducted at public housing developments in Chicago in which study participants had highly similar demographic characteristics and uniform apartments. The only factor that systematically differentiated participants was the amount of greenery outside of their apartments.

The USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program supported much of the research noted in this briefing paper on the recommendation of the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council. Findings do not necessarily reflect the views of the USDA Forest Service. The Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the University of Illinois also provided research funding.

For more information on the work of the University of Illinois Human-Environment Research Laboratory, please go to www.herl.uiuc.edu or contact the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Human-Environment Research Laboratory, 1103 S. Dorner Dr., Urbana, IL 61801; phone (217) 333-1965.

The Human-Environment Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a multidisciplinary research laboratory dedicated to studying the relationships between people and the environments they inhabit. The mission of the lab is to generate information about human-environment relationships to guide policy, planning, and design of environments. The lab's scientists explore how to create environments in which individuals, families, and communities flourish, and how to better involve people in the design, management, and stewardship of their local environments.

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## The Benefits of Urban Parks, a Review of Urban Research

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ABSTRACT: Urban parks are one of the most important components of cities and they have had an evolving role in the life of city residence. This role has ranged from relief the city to the mediator between humans and nature. This report presents the findings of a major literature review relating to benefits of urban parks. The review considers material from sources that include peer-reviewed literature, library and internet. The results of the study revealed the benefits of urban parks in four categories. Environmental Benefits including Ecological Benefits, Pollution Control, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation. Economic Benefits including Energy Savings, Urban parks and water management, Property Value. Social and Psychological Benefits including Recreation and Wellbeing, Human Health and Tourism actually Reducing Crime. Planning and design, including perceptions of green space, aesthetic values, the planning and design of green space.

*Keywords*: Environmental, Social, Economic, Planning and Design Benefits.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the findings of a major literature review relating to benefits of urban parks in four categories.

## Environmental Benefits: Ecological Benefits

Urban green spaces supply to cities with ecosystem services ranging from maintenance of biodiversity to the regulation of urban climate. Comparing with rural areas, differences in solar input, rainfall pattern and temperature are usual in urban areas. Solar radiation, air temperature, wind speed and relative humidity vary significantly due to the built environment in cities (Heidt and Neef, 2008). Urban heat island effect is caused by the large areas of heat absorbing surfaces, in combination of high energy use in cities. Urban heat island effect can increase urban temperatures by 5°C (Bolund and Sven, 1999). Therefore, adequate forest plantation, vegetation around urban dweller's house, management of water bodies by authorities can help to mitigate the situation. Green spaces that feature good connectivity and act as 'wildlife corridors' or function as 'urban forests', can maintain viable populations of species that would otherwise disappear from built environments (Haq, 2011; Byrne and Sipe, 2010). Regional green space is based on the protection and optimization of natural ecological system and actually refers to continuous suburban green space of large size. It not only improves the whole ecological environment of the city region and its neighbors, and provides important support of urban environmental improvement. Furthermore, introduction of suburban green space into city also acts as the base of ecological balance. In practice, problems of urban woods and citied agriculture should be paid sufficient attention (Wuqiang et al., 2012).

### **Pollution Control**

Pollution in cities as a form of pollutants includes chemicals, particulate matter and biological materials, which occur in the form of solid particles, liquid droplets or gases. Air and noise pollution is common phenomenon in urban areas. The presence of many motor vehicles in urban areas produces noise and air pollutants such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. Emissions from factories such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are

very toxic to both human beings and environment. The most affected by such detrimental contaminants are children, the elderly and people with respiratory problems (Sorensen et al., 1997). Urban greening can reduce air pollutants directly when dust and smoke particles are trapped by vegetation. Research has shown that in average, 85% of air pollution in a park can be filtered (Bolund and Sven, 1999). Noise pollution from traffic and other sources can be stressful and creates health problems for people in urban areas. The overall costs of noise have been estimated to be in the range of 0.2% - 2% of European Union gross domestic product (Bolund and Sven, 1999). Urban green spaces in over crowded cities can largely reduce the levels of noise depending on their quantity, quality and the distance from the source of noise pollution. In the contemporary studies on urban green spaces consider the complex urban ecosystem, conservation of the urban green spaces to maintain natural ecological network for environmental sustainability in cities. For the cities in fast urbanizing and growing economy, country like China should consider the dynamic form of urban expanding to manage effective urban green spaces which will contribute to reduce the overall CO2 by maintaining or even increasing the ability of CO2 absorption via natural ecosystem (Huang et al., 2009). Air pollution is generally considered as a major concern in urban areas, and as being among the major risk factors contributing to the global burden of disease, with for example high levels of particulate matter (PM) air pollution being associated with excess mortality and morbidity in the urban population. Various studies have identified the beneficial influence of urban vegetation on ambient air quality (Cavanagh et al., 2009); although most of these studies infer the impact of tree coverage on urban air quality models rather than from experimental data (Yang et al., 2005; Nowak et al., 2006; Escobedo and Nowak, 2009). Pollution removal varies among cities depending on e.g., the amount of tree cover, with increased tree cover leading to greater total removal, but also for example the length of the in leaf season and a range of meteorological variables that affect tree transpiration and deposition velocities (Paoletti et al., 2011). (Cavanagh et al., 2009) detailed on the specific role of urban trees in air pollution reduction, mentioning their effects in terms of intercepting atmospheric particles and absorbing various gaseous pollutants (Yin et al., 2011). But trees can also lower air temperature through transpiration, which affects the photochemistry of ozone and reduces ozone production. Although the impacts of urban trees thus have been studied rather extensively, at least through urban air quality models, there is suggestion that research specifically on urban parks has been limited so far (Pataki et al., 2011; Yin et al., 2011). Parks often have high tree covers and can also have the character of woodland, which is relevant as the deposition of gaseous pollutants is typically greater in woodlands than in shorter vegetation (Paoletti et al., 2011).

## Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

Green spaces do functions as protection centre for reproduction of species and conservation of plants, soil and water quality. Urban green spaces provide the linkage of the urban and rural areas. They provide visual relief, seasonal change and link with natural world (Francis, 1997). A functional network of green spaces is important for the maintenance of ecological aspects of sustainable urban landscape, with greenways and use of plant species adapted to the local condition with low maintenance cost, self sufficient and sustainable (Loures et al., 2007).

During the past decade research on urban biodiversity has become momentous not only because of the increasing impact of urbanization on natural ecosystems, but also because of the growing recognition of urban areas as hosts for innovative ways to conserve and promote biodiversity (Savard et al., 2000). The latter is illustrated by various global environmental conventions such as the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the 2007 Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity, and the Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity launched by among others the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP 2012). Researchers have stated that urban parks, due to their often high levels of habitat diversity and microhabitat heterogeneity, can constitute particularly important hotspots for biodiversity in the cityscape, albeit their primary role is recreational (Cornelis and Hermy, 2004).

## Economic Benefits: Energy Savings

Using vegetation to reduce the energy costs of cooling buildings has been increasingly recognized as a cost effective reason for increasing green space and tree planting in temperate climate cities (Heidt and Neef, 2008). Plants improve air circulation, provide shade and they evapotranspire. This provides a cooling effect and help to lower air temperatures. A park of 1.2 km by 1.0 km can produce an air temperature between the park and the surrounding city that is detectable up to 4 km away (Heidt and Neef, 2008). A study in Chicago has shown that increasing tree cover in the city by 10% may reduce the total energy for heating and cooling by 5 to 10% (Sorensen et al., 1997). Increased air temperatures can be expected to be particularly challenging in urban areas, where temperatures already tend to be higher than in the surrounding countryside (Oke, 1987). Climate change has a range of consequences for human health, including e.g., intensity and frequency of heat waves. (Oke, 1987) and

others have studied the impact of urban vegetation in terms of their possible cooling effect. Mechanisms at work in cooling by trees and other vegetation include evapotranspiration loss of water from plants as vapor into the atmosphere, which consumes energy from solar radiation and increasing latent rather than sensible heat, cooling the leaf and the temperature of the air surrounding the leaf. Shading from trees, which encompasses intercepting solar radiation and preventing the warming of the surface and air, is another mechanism, at work. Mechanisms depend critically on the type of vegetation (Bowler et al., 2010).

## Urban parks and water management

Water management is crucial to cities, particularly in times of climate change. Cities often import water from surrounding areas in addition to converting land cover from vegetated surfaces to buildings, pavement, and other impermeable surfaces. This land-cover change radically alters the pathways and magnitude of water and pollution flows into, within, and out of urban systems. Surface water flooding describes the combined flooding in urban areas during heavy rainfall. Surface water flooding is mainly caused by short duration intense rainfall, occurring locally (Fryd et al., 2011 and Pataki et al., 2011). Bio swales, rain gardens, green roofs and other green infrastructure components can help reduce runoff. Increased infiltration would promote groundwater recharge and evapotranspiration from vegetated surfaces, and thus help to improve climatic conditions in the city (Pauleit and Duhme, 2000; Pataki et al., 2011). Urban landscapes with 50–90% impervious cover can lose 40–83% of rainfall to surface runoff (Pataki et al., 2011).

## Property Value

Areas of the city with enough greenery are aesthetically pleasing and attractive to both residents and investors. The beautification of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was one of the factors that attracted significant foreign investments that assisted rapid economic growth (Sorensen et al., 1997). Indicators are very strong that green spaces and landscaping increase property values and financial returns for land developers, of between 5% and 15% depending on the type of project (Heidt and Neef, 2008). Different ways of estimating the economic value of nature have been explored over time. Especially in an urban setting, a way of indirectly assessing the economic value of green spaces is to study the impact of these spaces on house prices. If for example parks are valued by property buyers, this would be reflected in the premium they are willing to pay for the house or apartment. Quite a number of studies carried out, especially during 1990s. The real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for a property located close to parks and open space areas than for a home that does not offer this amenity (Crompton, 2001). (Luttik, 2000) in the Netherlands found that overlooking attractive landscapes and water resulted in a price premium of 8-12 respectively 6-12%.(Cho et al., 2008) studied the impact of forests on property prices in Knoxville City, USA and also found a positive impact on property prices caused by proximity of green spaces.

## Social and Psychological Benefits: Recreation and Wellbeing

Urban parks have been viewed as an important part of urban and community development rather than just as settings for recreation and leisure. Urban parks have been suggested to facilitate social cohesion by creating space for social interactions (Coley et al., 1997; Van Herzele and Wiedemann, 2003; Parr, 2007; Maas et al., 2009). People satisfy most of their recreational needs within the locality where they live. A study conducted in Helsinki, Finland, indicated that nearly all (97%) city residents participate in some outdoor recreation during the year. Urban green spaces serve as a near resource for relaxation; provide emotional warmth (Heidt and Neef, 2008). In Mexico City, the centrally located Chapultepec Park draws up to three million visitors a week who enjoy a wide variety of activities (Sorensen et al., 1997).

#### Human Health

People who were exposed to natural environment, the level of stress decreased rapidly as compared to people who were exposed to urban environment, their stress level remained high (Bolund and Sven, 1999). In the same review, patients in an hospital whose rooms were facing a park had a 10% faster recovery and needed 50% less strong pain relieving medication as compared to patients whose rooms were facing a building wall. This is a clear indication that urban green spaces can increase the physical and psychological wellbeing of urban citizens. Certainly, improvements in air quality due to vegetation have a positive impact on physical health with such obvious benefits as decrease in respiratory illnesses. The connection between people and nature is important for everyday enjoyment, work productivity and general mental health (Sorensen et al., 1997). Nature and green spaces contribute directly to public health by reducing stress and mental disorders (Annerstedt et al., 2012), increasing the

effect of physical activity (Mitchell, 2012), reducing health inequalities (Mitchell and Popham, 2008), and increasing perception of life quality and self-reported general health (Maas et al., 2006; Stigsdotter et al., 2010). Indirect health effects are conveyed by providing arenas and opportunities for physical activity (Coombes et al., 2010), increasing satisfaction of living environment and social interactions (Björk et al., 2008 and Maas et al., 2009), and by different modes of recreation (Weber and Anderson, 2010).

## Urban parks and tourism

Urban parks do not only provide recreational settings to local residents. Also visitors from out of town will use these areas. Urban parks can play an important role in attracting tourists to urban areas, e.g., by enhancing the attractiveness of cities and as harmonize to other urban attractions (Majumdar et al., 2011). (Wu et al., 2010) mention that within the field of eco-tourism, defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people (TIES, 1990), there has been increasing attention to urban ecotourism, defined by the Urban Ecotourism Conference in 2004 as nature travel and conservation in a city environment.

## Reducing Crime

Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and in particular to reduced juvenile delinquency. Research supports the widely held belief that community involvement in neighborhood parks is correlated with lower levels of crime. In neighborhoods where collective efficacy was strong, rates of violence were low, regardless of socio demographic composition and the amount of disorder observed. Collective efficacy also appears to deter disorder: Where it was strong, observed levels of physical and social disorder were low (Sampson, 2001).

## Planning and design benefits of urban parks

Planning and design, including perceptions of green space, aesthetic values, the planning and design of green space. Public perceptions of different types of green space were also evaluated by (Tyrvainen, 2003), who used forest image evaluation (291 respondents) to determine whether aesthetic and ecological values can be combined in the management of urban forests in Helsinki, Finland. This study showed that pine and birch stands were most preferred. Urban design gives the city a comprehensible structure, to connect different scales and parts of the urban parks. Urban parks planning and design should aim to produce spaces which are attractive and accessible to people; guidance on how best to do this and appropriate tools are needed. Urban parks design should aim to enhance the ecological functions of urban parks habitats. Different models can be adopted and tools are potentially available to help evaluate how well they function. Aesthetic benefits relate to people experiencing different colors, structure, forms and densities of woody vegetation. Much of the aesthetic experience is subjective in nature and has impacts on people's mental and emotional state (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989).

#### CONCULSION

Urban parks have many functions and benefits. These functions and benefits are important for improve life quality in the urban areas. This report presents the findings of a major literature review relating to benefits of urban parks in four categories.

- Environmental Benefits including Ecological Benefits, Pollution Control, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation.
- Economic Benefits including Energy Savings, Urban parks and water management, Property Value.
- Social and Psychological Benefits including Recreation and Wellbeing, Human Health, Tourism and Reducing Crime.
- Planning and design, including perceptions of green space, and the planning and design of green space.
  - o These are the main findings on Environmental Benefits of urban parks:
- Urban parks improve air quality and cover also filters out other particles and dust in the air.
- > Urban parks provide flora and fauna, diverse habitat for mainly common bird and animal species and support biodiversity conservation.
- Urban parks also improve the climate, reduce the heat island effect, cover raises humidity levels and help to improve micro-climate of urban areas where climate is warmer than their surroundings due to dense built environment
- Urban parks act as ecological corridors between urban, per urban and rural areas.
- ➤ Daytime temperature in large parks was found to be 2-3°C lower than the surrounding streets.

- > Urban parks can reduce noise pollution and absorb the noise generated by human activities, especially trees act like noise barrier.
- ➤ Urban parks control water regime and reduce runoff, hence helps to prevent water floods by absorbing excess water. The risk of flooding is lower where there are plenty of urban parks to intercept and absorb storm water.
- There is an increasing availability of tools for evaluating the environmental values of urban parks. These are very useful for planning and demonstrating values.
- ➤ Urban parks help to decrease carbon emission levels in cities. Through photosynthesis process in plants CO2 in the air is converted to O2. Therefore, urban parks cover helps to reduce excess CO2 in the urban atmosphere. Although the degree of trees' drawing carbon emissions from the air is affected by their size, canopy cover, age and health, large trees can lower carbon emission in the atmosphere by 2-3%.
- > Trees can also act like wind breaker.
  - o These are the main findings on Economic Benefits
- Urban parks Savings to employers from lower rates of absenteeism is likely to be extremely difficult to calculate. Urban parks provide employment opportunities during their design, construction and maintenance.
- Urban parks provide environments for walking, sports and other recreational activities for no cost at all, especially for lower income groups.
- > The health benefits of urban landscapes can reduce the costs of national health expenses.
- > Urban parks can help energy saving. Right selection and planting of plants can provide cooler environments in summer and warmer environments in winter thus reduce air conditioning expenses.
- As hidden asset to an area in part as a result of environmental quality, the values for tourism or savings to the economy as a result of lower absenteeism by employees as a result of better health effects are missing from the research base.
  - o The findings for Social and Psychological Benefits are as follows:
- Urban parks play a role in providing places for social interaction. Social aspects such as social cohesion are associated with an overall sense of wellbeing for certain sections of society who may feel excluded for one reason or another.
- Urban parks provide different benefits to urban dwellers in diverse ways.
- Amount of vegetation is not necessarily associated with lack of safety or crime. The whole area of safety and design of urban parks is still open for much more research as the evidence to date is conflicting and may depend on many local factors, given the way the research has been conducted to date, with small groups of respondents in specific local areas.
- Urban parks are perceived differently by different age groups but this is not considered in practice to any large extent.
- > Urban parks do actually promote social cohesion amongst and between different groups in different places, such as parks and gardens.
- Physical exercise in urban parks is generally positively associated with promoting wellbeing and upturn from stress.
- Being able to view urban parks also seems to have positive effects, especially on stress reduction or restoration.
- Safety aspects of urban parks covered here relate to children's play, where the need for safety has to be balanced against the need for challenging environments to excite children and to help them develop motor skills.
- There is evidence that some behavioral or emotional problems in children, such as attention deficit disorder, can be improved by exposure to urban parks.
- > Health benefits and social benefits may be linked when people participate in communal or group activities in urban parks.
- Urban parks can enhance tourism in cities by attracting people.
- Issues of gender, society, ageing and disability have received limited attention.
- > The closeness and ease of access of urban parks in relation to residential areas appears to affect the overall levels of physical activity.
- Urban parks can affect wellbeing in a wider sense.
  - o The findings for planning and design Benefits are as follows:
- Urban parks planning and design make spaces which are attractive and easy to get to people.

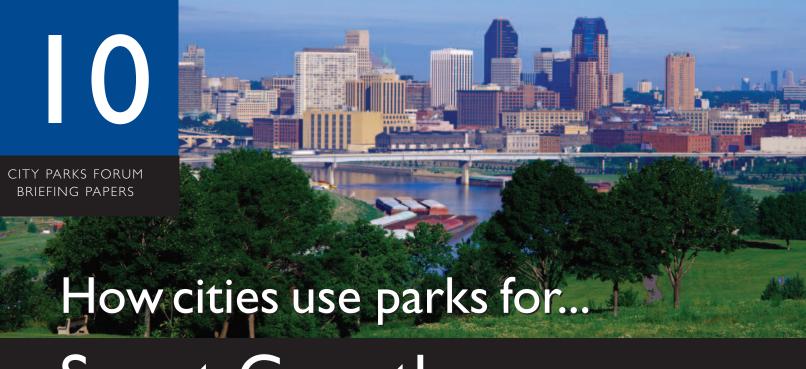
- Urban parks should be evaluated with clearly defined criteria for their ecological and recreational benefits requiring a good set of tools to measure efficiency and benefits.
- Urban parks design enhances the ecological functions of urban parks habitats.
- Urban parks projects surrounded in their landscape, ecological and social context; this varies from place to place and so locally relevant knowledge needs to be developed.
- Urban design; to give the city a comprehensible structure, to connect different scales and parts of the urban parks.

Aesthetic giving to cityscape influences property values. Accessibility, quality and visibility are basic factors that determine economic value of urban parks.

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# Smart Growth

## **Executive Summary**

Parks are commonly thought of as the venue for "fun and games," but that is only one role they play in a metropolitan environment. Urban parks, which broadly include parkland, plazas, landscaped boulevards, waterfront promenades, and public gardens, significantly define the layout, real estate value, traffic flow, public events, and the civic culture of our communities. With open spaces, our cities and neighborhoods take on structure, beauty, breathing room, and value.

Public understanding of the pivotal role that parks play in enhancing the quality of life in our cities is growing, along with an understanding of the links between the quality of city parks and sprawling growth on the fringe of cities. City parks are an important element of smart growth that addresses both the public's need for greenspace and the role of greenspace in mitigating higher development density. The smart growth concerns of the public create opportunities for both public agencies and private foundations to leverage support for smart growth, "by making and "re-making" city parks that both strengthen urban cores and protect the fringe.

## **Key Point #1**

Parks have voter support to direct public funds toward growth management strategies.

## Key Point #2

Parks enhance mixed development and redevelopment strategies, offsetting higher density concerns with accessibility to greenspace.

## **Key Point #3**

Parks can both strengthen the urban core and protect the fringe from overdevelopment.

## Smart Growth

## **KEY POINT #1:**

Parks have voter support to direct public funds toward growth management strategies.

Over the last decade, voters have overwhelmingly supported additional spending for parks and open space conservation. Since 1998, more than 750 measures have gone before voters across the country, with a successful passage rate of 80 percent. Nearly \$30 billion in new park and conservation funding has been created—more than \$4 billion in cities alone since 1996.

In the **November 2003 election**, voters created \$1.8 billion of new conservation funding, passing 100 out of 134 measures on the ballot. The use of new tax dollars to pay for parks and greenspace is a trend that recognizes the leveraging value of the enormous public interest in parks and greenspace. It is fueling new strategies and investments, blending regulatory and market-based tools to address the challenging issues of density, mixed use, and community livability.

This issue is important to voters from a number of smart growth angles. Voters prioritize water as a critical reason to buy land, no matter how it is expressed—from drinking water protection to protection of rivers and streams. Voters care about "natural areas," not "open space," which more often conveys a message of abandoned lots. And most importantly, voters care about creating parks for a reason—natural areas, recreation, and safe places for kids to play—rather than just creating parks that abstractly prevent sprawl.

In **Ann Arbor, Michigan,** 68 percent of voters approved a \$72 million bond measure for parks and open space in November 2003. The focus of the measure is to create a greenbelt around the city. "In neighboring communities there has been a very real and negative impact from sprawl, and the voters in Ann Arbor can see it themselves," according to Doug Cowerd, co-chair of the campaign. "There has been an impact on quality of life and voters have shown they are willing to pay to try and affect some positive change." (Trust for Public Land and Land Trust Alliance, 2004.)

## Miami, Los Angeles, and Raleigh, North Carolina,

have also benefited from partnerships with their counties, passing park measures worth hundreds of millions of dollars which are split between counties and cities for their separate priorities. Last November, voters in Raleigh passed a \$47 million bond measure with a 69 percent margin (Trust for Public Land and Land Trust Alliance, 2004). The funds will be spent over a seven-year period, which allows the city to pay them back without an increase in taxes. These funds can be further leveraged by use of a grant fund set up by Wake County. Grants are made for both planning and land acquisition. A 50 percent local match is required. Some municipalities have been allowed to pay their portion over time through a loan from the county.

In states where state programs will match local funding, including **Florida**, **Massachusetts**, **Colorado**, **and New Jersey**, local ballot measures have won partly on the availability of state funding matches that leverage local buying power. In 2003, in New Jersey, 27 municipalities passed measures ranging in size from \$180,000 to more than \$9 million (Trust for Public Land and Land Trust Alliance, 2004). Now 189 municipalities in New Jersey have dedicated open space taxes, generating more than \$200 million a year in funding.

#### **KEY POINT #2:**

# Parks enhance mixed development and redevelopment strategies, offsetting higher density concerns with accessibility to greenspace.

City neighborhoods need to maintain or increase their population while staying attractive and livable; however, density often remains a contentious issue for city neighborhoods of all types and sizes. Many residents oppose high density because they believe it will consume open space, exacerbate parking and traffic issues, or threaten the existing quality of life. A strong policy promoting parks and greenspace can play a crucial role in addressing these concerns.

As many now understand, density is less the issue than design and amenities. A recent study in Texas showed that people are twice as likely to accept smaller residential properties if there is a park nearby (44.3 percent versus 18.6 percent) (Waugh, 2004).

Vancouver, British Columbia, is widely recognized as a leader in making high density work. That city's efforts stem from the adoption of their Central Area Plan in the late 1980s, which shaped a growth strategy emphasizing housing and neighborhoods first, known locally as "Living First." Vancouver's focus on a core-area open space system acts to mitigate higher density, and to tie areas together by allowing people to travel on foot. As Larry Beasley, co-director of Vancouver Planning, comments, "It's about the open space and the public realm being used to contribute to neighborhood form and identity. It's not about having useless private plazas, but instead shaping buildings to emphasize the respite of open public park spaces and squares that are an integral part of every neighbourhood building cluster." (Beasley, 2002.)

One barrier to infill development is the need for upgraded infrastructure, including parks, to attract developers. Some cities are trying to address this issue. In 1998, the city council of **Portland, Oregon,** approved a systems development charge (SDC) that partly offsets the costs of services needed to support new housing. At the current rate of \$1,630 per single-family unit, the residential development fee generates about \$1.5 million a year for park capital improvements. Based on the SDC, the city developed a 20-year plan to build more capacity into the park system (www.portlandparks.org/ Planning/SystemDevCharge.htm).

Across the country, I I of the nation's largest cities, including Ft. Worth, Chicago, and Albuquerque, use impact fees to try to offset the costs of services delivered with new housing.

#### **KEY POINT #3:**

# Parks can both strengthen the urban core and protect the fringe from overdevelopment.

There is an important connection between open space/park programs and urban/metro growth policy. By reducing or eliminating some of the infrastructure and financial incentives for developing low-density "edge cities" far from the centers of metropolitan areas, cities can be created that have both vitality and environmental sustainability. A dense, vital central city helps decrease the pressure for peripheral development, while policies that limit development at the edge encourage the kind of infill development that helps keep central cities alive.

Although public interest and support for new conservation programs is high, elected officials rarely leverage city park projects and other green infrastructure into regional policies that protect against sprawl.

In an attempt to persuade cities and counties to think more about smart growth, **Maryland's** Priority Places Strategy uses the "carrot" of state funding, including infrastructure funds, as incentive for local governments to redirect development to existing growth areas. The program has helped support neighborhood redevelopment as well as protection of rural and open space resources with grants for land conservation (www.smartgrowth.state.md.us/mission.htm).

**Austin, Texas**, is seeking to control sprawl by focusing on the protection of drinking water. After a comprehensive mapping project showed that new housing construction was negatively affecting the city's all-important drinking water source, the Edwards Aquifer, the city decided to direct its public transportation and park investments to East Austin in an attempt to attract developers to concentrate growth on the less sensitive east side of town. East Austin is not only outside the drinking water protection zone but also is an area historically underserved by parks (Blaha and Harnik, 2000). Austin's 2004 Smart Growth map shows four new destination parks, all the city's proposed new rail corridors, and proposed infill development targeted to its "Desired Development Zone" on the east side of the city, and extensive watershed protection goals for the west part of the city. Since 1998, Austin has raised \$153 million through ballot initiatives for parks, open space, and watershed protection.

## Smart Growth

**Sioux Falls, South Dakota**, has also been aggressive in linking neighborhood conservation and rural development in its comprehensive plan, *Sioux Falls 2015: A Growth Management Plan* (Schmidt, 2002). While managing growth at the periphery—including mandating high-density projects and investing in new parks—Sioux Falls has aggressively redeveloped brownfields and vacant lands in its central city with the help of investments in its parks and trail system.

Regional park partnerships can work for growth management when multiple jurisdictions coordinate, and sometimes collaborate, on park plans that serve multiple needs across the region. Led by the Metropolitan Council, the seven counties surrounding the Twin Cities in Minnesota work together on a regional park and greenway plan that extends from rural sites that protect water quality to neighborhood parks and playgrounds in **Minneapolis and St. Paul.** 

Goals to protect natural areas in rural and suburban areas, as well as equity "gaps" in urban areas, are combined in planning and public outreach strategies. The Metropolitan Council received an award this year from APA's Minnesota chapter for its regional growth plan, which emphasizes four smart growth policies including conservation of natural resources for parks and economic benefits (www.metrocouncil.org/parks/parks.htm).

Based on the experiences of Maryland, Austin, Sioux Falls, and the Metropolitan Council in Minnesota, a parks/growth management policy effort can be effective if it is strongly supported by elected officials, the business community, and the general public. Their leadership requires continuing efforts on the part of local planners to keep citizens involved in the planning process, and to keep parks positioned as a redevelopment and growth management tool.

#### Resources

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## City Parks Forum Briefing Papers

This is one in a continuing series of briefing papers on how cities can use parks to address urban challenges. We hope the information here helps you to create great urban parks in your city.

Please visit our website at www.planning.org/cpf to learn more about The City Parks Forum.



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## City of Victoria

# Parks & Open Spaces Masterplan







## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

City of Victoria Council

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# **Executive Summary**

The City of Victoria's parks and open spaces are a vital piece of the city's character, culture, and vibrancy. Serving residents and visitors alike, they offer opportunities for socializing, recreation, relaxation, play, learning, and connecting with nature. They are an important contributor to quality of life, playing a role in the support of physical, social, ecological and economic health of the city and its residents. The residents of Victoria highly value their parks and open spaces and recognize the wide range of benefits they provide. As Victoria continues to grow and change, it is imperative that the development and management of park spaces and amenities align with community values and serve to protect the ecology and history of the area.

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is the culmination of a year-long effort to create a strategic level roadmap to help guide the planning and management of, and investment into the City's parks system for the next 25 years. The Plan is grounded in an analysis of the existing parks and open spaces inventory, community context and input from the public and stakeholders. The Plan takes a city-wide approach to the parks and open spaces system and defines an overall vision and four goals:

## VISION

Victoria's parks and open spaces system is dynamic, vibrant, playful, sustainable, inclusive, and diverse. It engages residents and visitors with the unique ecosystems, culture, and character of the city, supports health and wellness for all, and protects natural areas as a vital resource.

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## **GOAL 1: PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT**

Parks and open spaces protect and improve native ecosystems and help the city adapt to climate change.

## GOAL 2: FOSTER ENGAGING EXPERIENCES FOR EVERYONE

Parks and open spaces provide a range of different experiences, encourage active living, and are multifunctional, inclusive, and accessible.

## **GOAL 3: CELEBRATE VICTORIA**

Special places and amenities in parks and open spaces animate the city and support events for both residents and visitors.

## **GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS**

Community members, stewards, and partners help enhance all parks and open spaces in the city.

Each goal includes guiding principles, objectives, and actions. The guiding principles recognize the underlying philosophy and approach to parks and open spaces planning and management. The objectives break each goal in to specific focus areas, and the actions outline specific planning and capital projects that will help meet each goal.

The implementation of this plan will include specific planning and capital projects, as well as application of the guiding principles and actions through the development of Local Area Plans, creation of individual park management or improvement plans, and specific park design and development projects. This Master Plan does not outline specific locations for parks or park amenities, recognizing that this is most effectively done at the neighbourhood and park planning level. Enough flexibility is included to allow implementation to be tailored to suit the unique needs of each neighbourhood, through additional consultation with local residents.

The following actions were identified as priorities. The complete action plan is provided in Chapter 6, which lists all the actions with the timeframe and order of magnitude cost estimates.

## **Priority Actions**

Action	Description	Timeframe
1.2.3	Identify opportunities to daylight or celebrate culverted streams.	SHORT
2.1.1	Update and/or consolidate the City's land use policies related to park land designation including consolidating park properties with multiple titles, updating the OCP with the current inventory and developing park zoning designations within the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.	SHORT
2.1.2	Develop a Park Development and Acquisition Strategy, develop and maintain a list of priority park land acquisitions. Coordinate with the Local Area Plans process.	SHORT
2.1.3	Implement a life-cycle analysis framework to ensure accurate forecasting and planning for significant maintenance, upgrades, repairs, and replacement of park amenities such as washrooms, sports fields and courts, playgrounds, and, trails.	SHORT
2.1.4	Adopt park design guidelines for park furniture and amenities.	SHORT
2.1.6	Establish a list of priority improvement projects to address safety issues and other barriers to park use.	SHORT
2.2.4	Develop a Dogs in Parks Strategy that builds off of the experiences of the existing Paws in Parks Program.	SHORT
2.3.3	Establish and maintain standards of care to ensure safe, high quality play features.	SHORT
2.3.6	Identify a location and develop a second skate park that allows for a variety of activities (i.e. roller blading, scooters, and BMX inclusive), ages and abilities.	SHORT
2.6.1	Create a wayfinding and signage strategy for the parks and open spaces system.	SHORT
4.1.5	Create a Park Volunteer Policy and Program	SHORT
1.1.1	Develop a Biodiversity Strategy.	MEDIUM
2.2.1	Identify existing underutilized spaces and develop a strategy for how to encourage broader use.	MEDIUM
2.3.2	Establish a target and implementation plan for the provision of play spaces within an 800 meter walking distance of 99% of households.	MEDIUM
2.3.5	Develop an All-Wheels Strategy.	MEDIUM
2.4.1	Develop a Sports and Facility Development Strategy.	MEDIUM
2.6.2	Develop digital tools and strategies that help people find and explore Victoria's parks and open spaces.	MEDIUM

Action	Description	Timeframe
2.6.5	Identify strategies to reduce user conflicts on the Dallas Road pathway.	MEDIUM
3.1.1	Review and amend the Park Regulation Bylaw to allow limited commercial activities in the parks system.	MEDIUM
3.1.2	Identify opportunities and obstacles to increased activation of Beacon Hill Park.	MEDIUM
1.3.4 (B)	Implement mitigation strategies related to climate change impacts on marine shorelines (based on Short Term Planning Action 1.3.4, above).	LONG
1.1.2	Continue to implement the Urban Forest Master Plan.	OPERATIONAL
1.2.1	Update the Environmental Management Standards for park operations and maintenance that will increase the resilience of parks and open spaces.	OPERATIONAL
1.3.3	Identify plants and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change and develop management strategies to help mitigate impacts.	OPERATIONAL
1.3.4	Identify marine shorelines within the parks system that are vulnerable to climate change impacts and develop mitigation strategies.	OPERATIONAL
2.4.2	Continue to conduct annual meetings with sports league representatives and other user groups.	OPERATIONAL
2.5.1	Incorporate community gardening and related amenities into the parks system.	OPERATIONAL
2.5.3	Work with other significant land owners, both public and private, to identify locations for urban food production and community gardening.	OPERATIONAL
2.6.3	Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.	OPERATIONAL
2.6.4	Prioritize the development of active transportation linkages and infrastructure that connects residents and visitors to parks.	OPERATIONAL
2.6.6	Improve waterfront access and public uses along the City's waterfront spaces.	OPERATIONAL
4.1.1	Investigate the potential for Memorandums of Understanding with the provincial and federal governments, School District #61, the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, and other land owners responsible for key public spaces to coordinate planning and identify efficiencies in operations.	OPERATIONAL

## **CHAPTER**



## Introduction

The City of Victoria is located on the traditional territories of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. Victoria is the capital city of British Columbia and is a compact community of 85,000 residents with an expected population growth to 100,000 by 2041. Victoria is one of 13 municipalities that comprise the Capital region, which has an overall population of 380,000 people. The city has 13 neighbourhoods, each with a distinctive character and charm created by its unique mix of land uses, forms of development, and parks and open spaces. Given its constrained condition, Victoria is considered to be largely built out. Population growth and development is taking place through redevelopment and increasing densification of existing urban areas.

The 2041 vision for the City as described in the Official Community Plan is that "Victoria is an urban sustainability leader inspiring innovation, pride and

progress towards greater ecological integrity, livability, economic vitality and community resiliency confronting the changes facing society and the planet today and for generations to come, while building on Victoria's strength as a harbour-centred, historic, capital city that provides exceptional quality of life through a beautiful natural setting, walkable neighbourhoods of unique character, and a thriving Downtown that is the heart of the region."

The parks and open spaces system is a vital component of this overall vision. The system protects important natural areas and ecosystems, celebrates the history of the city and region, and attracts tourists from across the world. Victoria is known as the 'Garden City' and its horticultural displays contribute to the city's unique atmosphere and character. Victoria is a major tourist destination, and the parks and open spaces system is part of

what attracts those seeking cultural, historic, nature-based and active outdoor recreational activities.

The City of Victoria's parks and open spaces are a vital piece of the city's character, culture, and vibrancy. Serving residents and visitors alike, they offer opportunities for socializing, recreation, relaxation, play, learning, and connecting with nature. They are an important contributor to quality of life, playing a role in the support of physical, social, ecological and economic health of the city and its residents.

The residents of Victoria highly value their parks and open spaces and recognize the wide range of benefits they provide. As Victoria continues to grow and change, it is imperative that the development and management of park spaces and amenities align with community values and serve to protect the ecology and history of the area.

The City of Victoria's parks and open spaces are a vital piece of the city's character, culture, and vibrancy.



## 1.1 The Purpose of the Plan

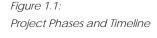
This Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan lays out a roadmap to guide planning, management, and investment over the next 25 years. The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is a strategic-level document that identifies broad goals and planning initiatives. It will be used to focus efforts and prioritize resources toward achieving measurable outcomes. To achieve this, the scope of this plan includes:

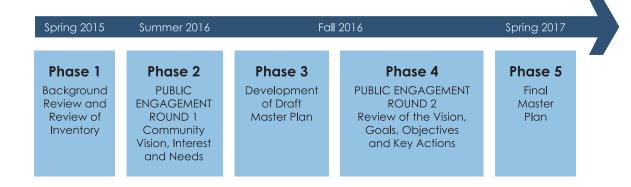
- Identification of key issues, opportunities and constraints;
- Identification of community values, interests and needs;

- Creation of a shared vision for the City's parks and open spaces;
- Creation of a set of goals for improving parks and open spaces;
- Identification of priorities for investment in parks and open spaces, and
- Development of an implementation plan to achieve the goals and priorities over the next 25 years.

## 1.2 The Plan Process

This plan was undertaken in five phases, as outlined in Figure 1.1.





## 1.3 What's in the Plan?

This plan describes where we are (Chapters 1-3), where we want to go (Chapters 4-5), and how we get there (Chapter 6). Each chapter is briefly described below.

#### WHERE ARE WE?

Chapter 2 – Best Practices and Trends is an overview of a range of topics affecting parks and open spaces including demographics, environment, outdoor recreation and sports, health, and parks trends and challenges.

Chapter 3 - The Current System describes the City of Victoria and its existing parks and open spaces system, including distribution of key park amenities, the balance of active and natural areas, and the highlights and special features. Other green spaces, such as schools and provincial lands, are also described in terms of their contribution to the system as a whole.

Chapter 4 – Public Engagement outlines the processes and tools used to engage with residents and gather input for the development of the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan. The key findings are outlined, with additional detailed findings provided in Appendix B.

### WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Chapter 5 – Vision, Goals, Objectives and Actions proposes a vision statement and four primary goals that will form the overarching direction for Victoria's parks and open spaces. Each goal is further described through a set of objectives and actions that will help create a parks system that truly reflects community values.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Chapter 6 - Implementation Plan describes how the plan will be implemented and includes priorities and timelines for the actions in Chapter 6. A brief overview of potential funding strategies is also provided.

# 1.4 Context within City Plans and Policies

This plan is informed by other City plans and policies and furthers existing strategic directions and goals. The 2012 Official Community Plan (OCP) identified numerous goals related to parks and open spaces, along with other aspects of City planning, which have been incorporated throughout this document. The 2015-2018 Strategic Plan specifically identified this Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan as an action to be undertaken.

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan will be used as a tool to inform the more detailed planning work that will take place through the development of Local Area Plans, creation of individual park management or improvement plans, and specific park design and development projects. This Master Plan does not outline specific locations for parks or park amenities recognizing that this is most effectively done at the neighbourhood and park planning level. Enough flexibility is included in this plan to allow implementation to be tailored to suit the unique needs of each neighbourhood, through consultation additional with local residents. Parks, particularly neighbourhood parks, should reflect the diverse character and needs of each neighbourhood. Figure 1.2 illustrates the relationship of this plan with other City plans and documents.

Figure 1.2: Planning Context for the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan



# 1.5 Plans and Policies Informing The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan

A number of plans and policies were reviewed for the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan. Relevant goals, objectives, outcomes, actions, and recommendations were identified and incorporated directly or were used as inspiration for the Goals, Objectives and Actions outlined in Chapter 5 of this plan.

The primary documents that were reviewed include:

- Official Community Plan (2012)
- 2015-2018 Strategic Plan
- Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)
- Greenways Plan (2003)
- 2016 #Biketoria study

### 2012 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The primary document that guided and influenced all aspects of this plan was the Official Community Plan (OCP). Some of the key goals and objectives of the OCP, related to parks and open spaces, included:

- Expand the variety of parks and balance the multiple purposes and uses of parks, such as cultural events, recreation, sports, ecosystem services, commemoration, and aesthetic enjoyment;
- Identify additional areas for ecological protection and restoration in parks, and develop appropriate management strategies and practices;
- Enhance child- and youth-friendly parks and recreational facilities, services, and programs in the city, to promote a healthy community and to help attract and retain households with children;
- Develop a Parks Acquisition Strategy; and
- Develop a Sports Fields Strategy.

## Broad Objectives for Parks and Recreation (Official Community Plan 2012)

The parks and recreation policies of this plan collectively address five broad objectives:

- 9 (a) That a network of parks and open spaces meets citywide and local area needs, including at least one park or open space within walking distance (400 metres) of 99% of households.
- 9 (b) That a well-connected, clearly identifiable, and multi-functional network of greenways is established across the city.
- 9 (c) That parks, open spaces and facilities contribute to the enhancement and restoration of ecological functions.
- 9 (d) That a diversity of facilities, services and programming enables broad community access and participation in an active lifestyle.
- y (e) mat parks and recreational facilities are designed to achieve multiple benefits and accommodate a diversity of people and activities.

### 2015-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan outlines 13 strategic objectives, each with a set of more detailed objectives, outcomes, and actions. Completion of this Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is one of the key actions identified.

The David Foster Harbour Pathway was identified as a high priority as it will help achieve multiple objectives. Other highlights of the Strategic Plan include a focus on placemaking and enlivening public spaces, improving accessibility for everyone, collaborating with School District 61, and improving connectivity and safety.

## **URBAN FOREST MASTER PLAN (2013)**

The Urban Forest Master Plan provides guidance on the management and enhancement of the treed environment throughout Victoria, including within parks and open spaces. It outlines a roadmap for investment and maintenance of the urban forest over the next 20 years.

Many linkages and synergies exist between the urban forest and the parks and open spaces system, and several recommended actions from the Urban Forest Master Plan have been incorporated into this Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan with additional details to help support implementation and ensure coordination between the plans.

In 2060, Victoria's homes and businesses lie within a stunning urban forest that is healthy, diverse and abundant in all parts of the city. Treed environments are valued as an integral part of this vibrant, livable and sustainable community: supporting biodiversity and watershed health; enhancing neighbourhoods; and creating places for activity, enjoyment and relaxation. Victoria's urban forest exemplifies sound and innovative practices and community stewardship.

Urban Forest Master Plan Vision Statement

## **GREENWAYS PLAN (2003)**

The Greenways Plan was developed to provide a policy framework and a series of strategies to establish a greenways system for Victoria. The three goals were:

- To establish a human-powered transportation network;
- To restore native, aquatic and cultural habitats; and
- To provide opportunities for recreation.

The proposed greenways network identified linkages between destinations including parks, schools, commercial centres. recreation centres and other common destinations. The Greenways Plan and the network map were reviewed in terms of the connectivity and synergies with this Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan.

## 2016 #BIKETORIA STUDY

The 2016 Biketoria Study reviewed the existing cycling network, made recommendations for 2014 enhancements to the recommended network, and identified priority corridors. The study was primarily focused on improving the cycling network for active transportation and overall city-wide connectivity. The priority routes were reviewed in terms of the connectivity to Victoria's parks and open spaces.



## 1.6 Community Profile and Context

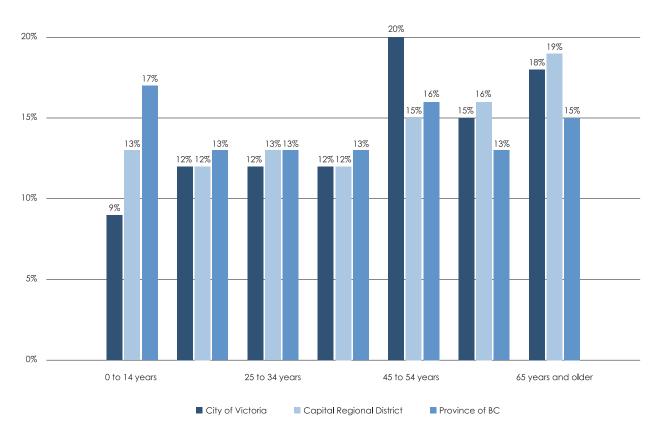
## **Demographics**

Victoria had a population of 85,792 people in 2016, while the metropolitan area of Greater Victoria had a population of 383,360 (Statistics Canada, 2016). The largest segment of the population in 2011 was between 45 and 54 years of age (20%), with 18% of the population being 65 and over. The median age was 41.9, which slightly increased from 41.6 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Population projections for the Capital Regional District estimate a 28% increase in population between the years 2011-2038, with the largest increase projected in those age 75 and older. There is also a large cohort of people who are currently between 50 and 65 and will be retiring over the next 10-20 years (Statistics Canada, 2011). The population is expected to grow to 100,000 by 2041 and is expected to see a substantial increase in older adults and retirees (City of Victoria, 2012).

The greatest influence on the growth of the Capital Regional District's population is a net influx of





people migrating from other areas of BC and Canada. Most of those who move from other locations in the Province were under the age of 50 (80%). Of those moving from other parts of Canada, the top three demographics included "preretirees" from ages 45-64 (~50%), young adults from ages 18-24 (22%), and retirees from ages 65-74 (12%). Young adults are drawn to the area for the educational opportunities, while the influx of those age 45-64 reflect the status of the Capital Regional District as a retirement destination (Urban Futures, 2014).

These demographic trends suggest that the parks and open space system will need to adapt to serve a larger proportion of older adults who are likely to remain active longer than previous generations. Parks will also be a key quality of life factor that will help attract and maintain families. Although children and youth will become a smaller proportion of the population overall, there will be a continued need to provide spaces for them.

#### Housing and Development Patterns

The City of Victoria is divided into 13 neighbourhoods, each with its own distinct character. Downtown and Harris Green are the densest neighbourhoods, followed by North Park and James Bay. Between 2006 and 2011, the greatest increase in the number of dwelling units occurred

in the Downtown, Harris Green, and Victoria West neighbourhoods. In all other neighbourhoods the number of dwelling units did not change significantly (between 2% decrease and 1% growth). The Urban Core, Town Centres, and Urban Villages are expected to shift toward medium and high density neighbourhoods to ensure housing needs are met, provide complete communities, encourage transit and active transportation, and ensure affordability (City of Victoria, 2012).

In 2011, 59% of Victoria residents rented their dwelling. The neighbourhoods with the highest rental rates were North Park, Downtown and James Bay (77%, 73%, and 69% respectively). The neighbourhoods with the highest home ownership rates were Gonzales, Oaklands, and Victoria West (70%, 58%, and 49% respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2011). Also of note, the number of one person households is at nearly 50% and will likely rise (see Figure 1.5).

The implications of these trends are that the City will need to take into account the higher demand placed on parks around the pockets of increased density, ensuring that park spaces are accessible to as many residents as possible. Development pressure and land values around these nodes will likely be higher than other areas, potentially making park land acquisition challenging. The high proportion of those living alone

Figure 1.4: Victoria's Parks and Neighbourhoods



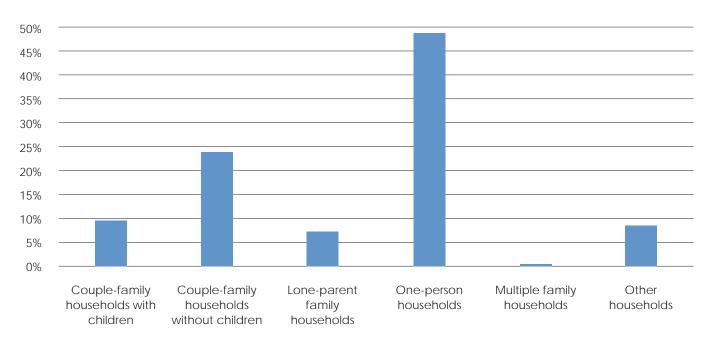
means it is critical to maximize the use of parks for those activities that build community, connect people, offer opportunities for socializing, and reduce isolation.

## **Economy**

Victoria has one of the strongest economies in B.C., which has been enhanced by a rapidly growing knowledge-based economy which now boasts annual revenues in excess of \$4 billion and has surpassed Tourism. As identified in the City of Victoria's economic action plan called Making Victoria -Unleashing Potential, the six sectors that serve as the primary engines driving businesses, generating jobs and raising household incomes are; Technology, Experiential Tourism, Government, Advanced Education

and Research & Development, Ocean and Marine, and Entrepreneurship/Start-ups/Social Enterprise. These engines were derived from data for the region and extrapolated for Victoria where possible. These engines will also help to stimulate growth in retail, arts and culture and other sectors that contribute to quality of life, wellbeing and happiness of Victorian's. In Victoria, the City's parks and open spaces contribute significantly to the economy by providing recreational opportunities, iconic views and vistas, and spaces for festivals and events that bolster the tourism industry. They also create a high quality of life that helps attract new businesses and job opportunities.

Figure 1.5:
Distribution of households by household type, Victoria, BC (Statistics Canada, 2011)



Parks and open spaces are increasingly being recognized for their direct and indirect benefits to the economy.



## **CHAPTER**



## Best Practices & Trends

# 2.1 Benefits of Parks and Open Spaces

A significant body of research shows the importance of parks, open spaces, and recreation from a broad perspective. Key areas of benefit include individual well-being, community connectedness, ecological health, and economic benefits.

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, in partnership with the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, has assembled the National Benefits Hub (2016), an online resource with over 1,000 evidence based references that detail the benefits of parks, recreation, sports,

fitness, arts, and culture. This research has been summarized into eight key evidence-based benefits that indicate parks:

- Are essential to personal health as active living is a key determinant of health status;
- Are key to balanced human development;
- Are essential to quality of life and place;
- Reduce self-destructive and antisocial behavior;
- Build strong families and healthy communities;
- Reduce health care, social service, and police/justice costs;
- Are significant economic generators, and
- Are essential to our environmental and psychological survival.

The National Benefits Hub also details the environmental benefits provided by natural areas in parks through description of their important ecosystem services, including:

- Maintenance of clean air and water;
- Support of biodiversity;
- · Climate stabilization;
- Provision of essential nutrient cycling;
- Support of pollinator populations, and
- Provision of flood mitigation and protection.

## 2.2 Trends and Challenges

The trends and challenges faced by Victoria's parks and open spaces system have been identified through the engagement process and linked to provincial and national trends. Sources include the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA, 2006), and Public Health BC. Trends and key challenges in recent parks master plans from other similar communities were also reviewed.

## 2.2.1 NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

## **Environmental Awareness**

Concern about climate change, water supply, species decline, and other environmental issues are affecting peoples' perceptions and behavior. In Victoria, 98% believe that "protecting and highlighting natural areas and environmental stewardship" is very or somewhat important, while the number one answer to what Victoria's parks system is missing was "more parks, greenspaces, and natural areas" (Mustel Group Market Research, 2016).

With eco-tourism and outdoor education increasing, municipal parks are often the most accessible places to experience native ecosystems and wildlife, particularly for school groups.

## Seeking a Work-Life Balance

Increased commuting, two-career families, increasing demand workplace for productivity, and multiple extracurricular commitments for children have contributed to the growing need to fit leisure activities into convenient time slots. In Victoria, "lack of time" was the most commonly cited barrier to using parks and open spaces more often. Reasons for dissatisfaction in the parks system included "not enough parks" (65%) and lack of accessibility (20%). Ensuring a good distribution of parks, improving connectivity and access, and grouping amenities for different age groups and interests can improve the convenience of parks and their integration with peoples' everyday lives.

## Concern for Personal Safety in Public Places

A person's sense of safety in a park or on a trail is affected by both actual and perceived risk. Park users may feel unsafe even where there have been no reported crimes or incidents (BCRPA, 2006). In Victoria, 26% of residents cited "feeling unsafe" as a barrier to visiting parks more often, ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the phone survey and 1<sup>st</sup> in the online survey. Improved lighting and sightlines, improved wayfinding and accessibility, and careful location and grouping of amenities can help address this barrier.

#### Concern for Health and Wellness

While adults in BC are more active than they used to be, the level of activity declines with age. Active living can add up to two years to life expectancy (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 1997). As Victoria's population ages, it is important to support active living. The Parks and Open Spaces Survey indicates that having safe places to walk should be a priority. Walking was the number one activity among adults (52% phone, 83% online) and pathways were the most appreciated amenity. The four most popular activities - walking, bicycling, hiking, and running/ jogging - use pathways and trails.

## Meeting the Needs of Children

Children need adequate and engaging play opportunities to develop their social, cognitive, and physical abilities and counteract the health effects of rising obesity rates and increasing screen time. Further evidence indicates that providing children with access to natural

areas and contact with soil, plants and the non-built environment can improve health and well-being (BCRPA, 2006).

## Increases in Informal and Individual Activities and Experiences

peoples' schedules increasingly busy, there is greater demand for informal and individual leisure activities such as walking or cycling, than for organized team sports with programmed schedules. This trend is reflected in the Parks and Open Spaces Survey data from Victoria residents where 7 out of the top 10 activities were individual pursuits. People are also seeking out experiential programs like outdoor adventures, cultural learning opportunities, and environmental education. are also interested in activities and programs with a social element, especially older adults.

## Declining and Changing Volunteer Trends

There has been a significant drop-off in volunteerism, with fewer volunteers contributing a greater proportion of hours. People are increasingly opting for short, event-based volunteer opportunities rather than long-term commitments. The most common reasons for not volunteering were lack of time and inability to make a long term commitment (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Evidence shows that, in addition to environmental benefits, there are significant and quantifiable social and economic benefits associated with urban forest and ecosystem protection.

## 2.2.2 LOCAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

## Urban Forests and Biodiversity

In an effort to reverse trends of loss of urban trees, ecosystems, and biodiversity, cities across Canada are increasingly working to mitigate negative human impacts and address aging urban tree inventories. Evidence shows that, in addition to environmental benefits, there are significant and quantifiable social and economic benefits associated with urban forest and ecosystem protection. Victoria's Urban Forest Master Plan identifies increasing property values, lower crime, and increased retail sales (Gye & Associates Ltd., 2013).

## Infrastructure Gap

As municipalities across the country struggle with aging infrastructure, park development, management, and maintenance can fall by the wayside. Demonstrating the value of new parks and amenities is essential, as is the development of partnerships and a strong volunteer base. Opportunities to enhance adjacent public open spaces can often be pursued in concert with infrastructure projects. The incorporation of improved cycling, pedestrian, and public open space amenities as part of the Johnson Street Bridge replacement project is an example of how the City is already doing this.

## Trails and Active Transportation

Creative solutions are needed to address demand for trails. These include the conversion of old infrastructure, such as "Rails to Trails" projects like the Kettle Valley Trail, the Cowichan Valley Trail, and the region's popular Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails. Trails can also be added within active rail right of ways, such as the E & N Rail Trail – Humpback Connector from Victoria to Langford.

Planning and implementation is underway to develop Victoria's on and off-road bicycle routes, but, given that pathways are the most appreciated amenity in the Parks and Open Spaces Survey, there is a need for a strategic effort to increase trails and pathways within the parks system.

#### Dogs in Parks

Meeting demand for off-leash dog facilities and managing conflicts with other park and trail users is a key challenge for many urban municipalities, as the number of dogs in parks may increase with density. As backyards become less common, parks are the primary place for people to walk their dogs. This is a valid use of park space that can contribute to health and wellbeing, as well as safety since dog owners use parks year-round and during off-peak hours. However, since wildlife and environmental

areas, sports fields, and health and safety can be negatively affected by poor owner control of off-leash pets, waste management issues, and too many paws in the wrong places, it is important to find balance between competing demands. There is a critical need for a multipronged approach to dogs in parks including active management, education, and careful planning and location of designated off-leash areas.

#### Sports Participation Trends

While the proportion of people participating in organized sports is declining, participation among children is still strong. Organized sports for young adults are often socially oriented, with a trend toward coed teams, especially for soccer and volleyball. While baseball and soccer are still the top field sports, field hockey and rugby are growing in popularity and were frequently mentioned by online survey respondents (15% and 13% for youth ages 12-17, respectively). Park space devoted to organized sports is under growing pressure due to the variety of sports to be accommodated and increasing demand for unprogrammed and natural areas.

## Other Activity Trends

In order to improve parks and expand the benefits to a wider population, many municipalities are seeking to expand the range of park amenities to support a greater variety of activities. Key challenges include insurance, space, and funding needs (Parks and Recreation Ontario, 2004).

Action and adventure sports continue to gain popularity, with off-road biking (16%) and kayaking (7%) the most frequently cited activities in this category amongst adults in the Parks and Open Spaces Survey.

Other activities of note include disc golf and croquet, with each mentioned by 3% of people in the online survey.

## Community Gardens

Community gardens are surging in popularity and branching out into municipal parks, vacant lots, parking lots, and transportation right of ways. Most municipalities are supportive of community gardens because they provide multiple benefits including supporting food security and healthy eating, promoting inter-generational social interaction, and attracting participation from diverse residents who may not use other parks or open spaces. Public engagement on the master plan reaffirmed the results from the City's 2015 Growing in the City initiative, showing strong support for community gardens (Phone Survey - 89%).



## Special Events and Festivals

Special events and festivals are growing in popularity due to increases in sports tourism, races for charitable causes, desire for "experiences" over activities, and the trend toward activities that are multigenerational and do not require a long-term commitment. They provide benefits to the community including tourism, inclusive, dynamic, and multi-generational events, and

support for arts, culture, and music in the community. Challenges include balancing the needs of visitors and residents, addressing traffic and parking issues, providing the necessary support infrastructure, and managing impacts of high concentrations of people. The public engagement results showed that most residents are in favor of increasing organized events and festivals in parks (Phone Survey - 71%).

## **CHAPTER**



# The Current System

Victoria's parks and open spaces encompass 207 hectares (511 acres) of municipal parks and open spaces and approximately 132 hectares (326 acres) of other public open spaces (City of Victoria, 2016). They are an essential part of the City's character and foster a high quality of life, supporting healthy and active lifestyles for residents and visitors. The parks and open spaces include over 90 hectares (220 acres) of natural areas including Garry Oak meadows, rocky outcrops and coastal bluffs. Victoria's parks also provide a variety of amenities including play spaces, sports fields and courts, outdoor fitness equipment, dog off-leash areas, lawn bowling greens, plazas, gardens and horticultural displays, picnic areas, and a band shell. This chapter provides an overview of the existing parks and open spaces system and its amenities. It also includes a selection of city-wide evaluation measures that identify gaps in the current system.

A detailed inventory of the parks and open spaces system was completed by the City in 2016 and is summarized in Appendix A. Condition assessments of this inventory are either underway or will commence in 2017. This inventory was the primary source of information for this chapter, along with City planning documents, reports, GIS data, and the extensive knowledge of the City's parks staff. The approach of this project was intended to be city-wide and strategic, and as such a park by park analysis and detailed condition assessment was not part of the project scope.

# 3.1Municipal Parks& Open Spaces

The City's parks and open space system ranges from large parks which often act as venues for special events and outdoor sport activities, to community and neighbourhood parks and to small greens. Some of the key greenspaces in the City include:

## Beacon Hill Park

south of downtown. Beacon Hill Park is Victoria's largest, flagship park destination. Beacon Hill Park was granted in Trust to the City by the Province in 1882. It is an important heritage resource and is a designated heritage site. It has open vistas across the Strait of Juan De Fuca and a variety of natural areas and horticultural displays. The park offers unparalleled views in every season, from wildflower covered slopes in the spring to spectacular waves on stormy days (City of Victoria, 2017).

The landscape of this area was shaped by the Lekwungen People (today represented by the Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation), and is a place of historical, cultural and sacred significance. The park also holds an important status as the western terminus, the Mile "0" of the 8,000 kilometre Trans-Canada Highway.

Beacon Hill Park contains many opportunities for active recreation including sports fields, putting green, children's farm, playgrounds, cricket

pitch, water parks and a lawn bowling club. However Beacon Hill Park is probably best known for its natural features, such as the fragile, native Garry Oak ecosystem, Black Cottonwood Semi-swamp, Douglasfir woods and large grasslands and Camas meadows.

#### **Topaz Park**

As Victoria's third largest park, Topaz Park hosts a variety of sport and community events each year. Located north of downtown in the Hillside-Quadra neighbourhood, it prides itself as being the main active recreation park in the City. It is home to the City's only artificial field and numerous other features such as a lacrosse box, several sport fields, baseball diamonds, dog off-leash areas, fitness equipment and a playground.

#### Victoria West Park

Victoria West Park is a significant community amenity for the Victoria West neighbourhood, which is separated from the rest of the City by Victoria Harbour and the Gorge Waterway. It features a popular skate park as well as a dog off-leash area, playground and sports fields and courts.

#### **Royal Athletic Park**

Royal Athletic Park is the City's sports and special events stadium. It is home to the Victoria

HarbourCats baseball team, and is also used by soccer and football teams. Royal Athletic Park often hosts larger special events such as music festivals.

#### Waterfront

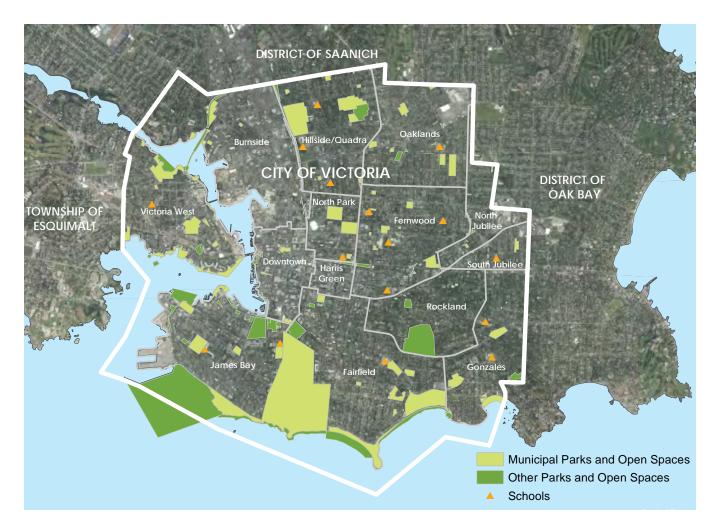
The City of Victoria has an extensive and varied marine shoreline with many opportunities for scenic vistas, socializing, relaxing, and recreation. Among the highlights of the shoreline amenities in the parks and open spaces system are the David Foster Harbour Pathway, Dallas Road, Clover Point, Gonzales Beach, Westsong Walkway and Songhees Park. The David Foster Harbour Pathway connects multiple parks and nodes, such as Ship Point Park and Fisherman's Wharf. Pedestrians can pause to enjoy the views, visit a market or a festival, relax and socialize. The pathway provides a well-used recreational amenity for local residents, and is also an important tourist amenity.

Paddling is a popular activity in the City. While small crafts like kayaks and paddle boards can be launched from many shoreline locations without a dock, some of the key access points with docks include Banfield Park, Regatta Point Park, and Clover Point.

## 3.2 Other Parks and Open Spaces

In addition to City-owned parks, there are over 40 hectares of other lands in Victoria that contribute to the green spaces, including regional parks and trails, schools, provincial lands, federal lands, and lands managed by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority. They offer a range of amenities including playgrounds, natural areas, trails, waterfront access, historic sites, gathering spaces, gardens, and unprogrammed open space. The lands vary in their accessibility to the public and the degree to which they provide park-like benefits.

Figure 3.1:
Parks and Open Spaces



## 3.2.1 CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT LANDS

Capital Regional District (CRD) Parks manages a system of regional parks and trails. Regional parks are intended to protect natural areas that define the geography of the CRD and provide opportunities for non-motorized outdoor recreation. They range in size from five hectares to 7,000 hectares and include conservation, wilderness, natural areas, and outdoor recreation parks. Regional trails provide transportation routes for commuting or recreation, as well as habitat for wildlife and plants. The CRD's parks focus on preserving natural areas of ecological significance and important habitat for plants and animals (Capital Regional District, 2012). Within the City of Victoria, CRD Parks manages Gonzales Hill Regional Park and portions of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and E & N Rail Trail.

CRD Integrated Water Services owns the lands at Smith Hill Reservoir adjacent to Victoria's Summit Park. This reservoir once supplied the city with its water supply. By the late 1940s, it was in use only as a backup water supply and today, it is not part of the region's water supply system but plays a role in the region's emergency management program.

## 3.2.2 SCHOOLS

There are currently 16 private and public schools in the City of Victoria. While most include open green spaces and play spaces, they vary in their accessibility to the public and the degree to which they

provide park-like benefits. The total site area of the public school grounds is 14.56 hectares (35.98 acres). This includes buildings, parking lots, and associated open space. The largest school sites are Victoria Senior Secondary School, Central Junior Secondary School, and Victoria West Elementary School.

Public schools, which provide some of the same functions as neighbourhood and community parks, are under the greatest threat of change and potential loss of open space. Declining school enrolment has led to recent closures, including Blanchard and Burnside Schools. The B.C government has recommended that alternate community uses for schools be considered prior to selling the sites to the private sector.

The City has no formal joint use agreement with the School District to facilitate public use, although sports leagues do apply directly to the school district for permits to use many of the sports fields. Some school sites, such as Victoria West Elementary School, provide significant public open space, filling what would otherwise be a gap in the municipal park system.

## 3.2.3 PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Provincial and Federal lands, parks, and plazas in Victoria contribute approximately 25 hectares (61.7 acres) to the passive green spaces in the City. The most significant of these sites are Government House, St. Ann's Academy and the grounds of the BC Legislature Building. The range of amenities includes urban plazas with water features, historic sites, waterfront vistas, monuments, green spaces and ecological areas. Some of the sites include the lands located around institutional and government buildings.

#### Esquimalt

The Township of Esquimalt's parks and open spaces system is comprised of fifteen parks and four open spaces, including the E & N Regional Trail which will provide a connection from Victoria West to the West Shore Communities. The parks system contains seven playgrounds, as well as the Archie Browning Sports Centre, Bullen sports field and a lacrosse box.

Public schools, which provide some of the same functions as neighbourhood and community parks, are under the greatest threat of change and potential loss of open space.

## 3.2.4 GREATER VICTORIA HARBOUR AUTHORITY

The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA) owns and manages the Inner Harbour causeway, the Ogden Point breakwater, Fisherman's Wharf, Ship Point Wharf and other shoreline areas. There are public open space amenities within GVHA lands, including the David Foster Harbour Pathway.

## 3.2.5 ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

Victoria's context within the larger region provides residents with opportunities to enjoy the parks, open spaces and facilities provided in other municipalities. Examples include the Cedar Hill Golf Course, sports fields in Saanich and Esquimalt, and the beaches in Oak Bay.

#### Oak Bay

The District of Oak Bay currently manages twenty nine parks; these parks offer a variety of amenities such as trails, picnic areas, seating areas, sports fields and courts, playgrounds, horticultural displays, beaches and green open spaces.

## Saanich

The District of Saanich has an extensive parks system of 171 parks, which cover 820 hectares. The parks system also includes over 100 kilometres of trails and 56 playgrounds, in addition to sports fields, courts, beaches and a golf course. Some of the popular parks include Cadboro - Gyro Park, Cuthbert Holmes Park, Gorge Waterway Park and Mount Douglas Park.

## 3.3 Trails and Greenways

Victoria has an extensive network of greenways, bike routes, trails and paths that provide opportunities for recreation and active transportation. The Greenways Plan (2003) and the active transportation network plan outline the future of these amenities across the City and beyond. Active transportation and park systems naturally work together to support active lifestyles and improve connectivity and accessibility.

Key trails and greenways include the Harbour Pathway, Dallas Road waterfront, Westsong / Songhees Walkway, and the Galloping Goose and E&N Regional Trails.

## David Foster Harbour Pathway

The David Foster Harbour Pathway is a waterfront route which connects residents and visitors with key destinations in the city, celebrates the unique working waterfront, and recognizes the history of the Lekwungen people. Once complete, the Harbour Pathway will extend over five kilometres from Rock Bay to Ogden Point.

## Galloping Goose Regional Trail

The Galloping Goose Regional Trail is a picturesque multi-use trail, formerly a railway line, which moves through urban, rural and wilderness scenery on its 55 kilometre journey from Victoria to Sooke. It is part of the Trans Canada Trail, a national multi-use trail system linking trails from coast to coast. The City operates the section from the Selkirk Trestle to downtown Victoria.

## E&N Regional Rail Trail

The Capital Regional District is leading the construction of a 17 km new cycling and pedestrian trail linking Victoria and communities to the west along the E&N rail corridor. When complete, the trail will start at the Johnson Street Bridge in Victoria and extend west through the Victoria West neighbourhood and into Esquimalt, View Royal, Colwood and Langford. At its western extent, the trail will connect to the Trans Canada Trail, heading north to the Cowichan Valley.

## Dallas Road Waterfront Route

The Dallas Road waterfront pedestrian and cycling route connects to Beacon Hill Park and continues along sidewalks, side streets, and some sandy beaches to Oak Bay. The trail is widely used for walking, jogging and picnicking,

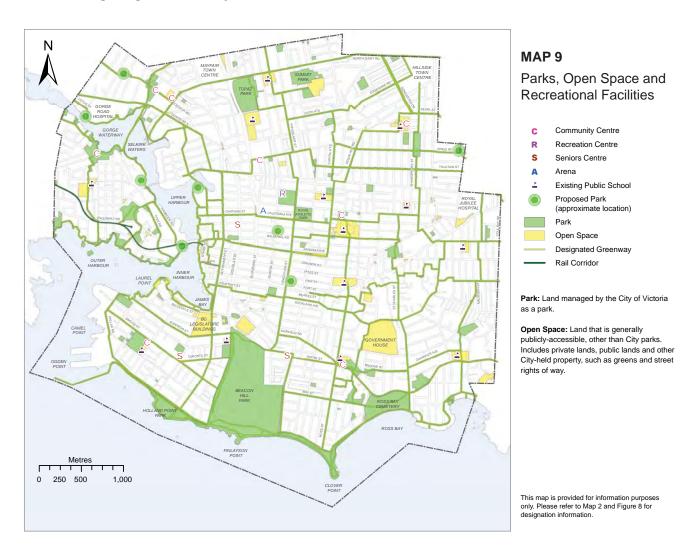
with sightseeing benches and stairs leading down to the rocky and sandy coastline. The adjacent streets also form an important seaside bicycle touring route. Clover Point is the pacific terminus of the Trans Canada Trail.

## Westsong/Songhees Walkway

The Westsong/Songhees Walkway

is a scenic path which starts on the west side of the Johnson Street Bridge and winds westward along the Victoria Harbour into the Township of Esquimalt. It offers spectacular views of the Inner Harbour and downtown Victoria as well as great opportunities for observing waterfowl and other wildlife.

Figure 3.2: Parks and Greenways System (2012 OCP)



# 3.4 Parks and Open Spaces Supply Analysis

As the urban density and population increase, demand for parks, open spaces, and outdoor amenities such as gathering and social spaces also increase. There is no definitive way to establish whether a City has an adequate supply of park land, but common metrics include assessments of the amount of park land per capita compared

to other municipalities and whether residents can easily walk to parks.<sup>1</sup>

Park land per capita was also used to compare the supply of park land for each neighbourhood. This is an important consideration because parks that serve more people will be more heavily used than parks in neighbourhoods with fewer people.

Table 3.1:
Parks and Open Spaces Supply Analysis

Year	Population	Municipal Parks and Open Spaces² (hectares)	Municipal Parks and Open Spaces per 1000 residents	% of Municipal Land Base	All Public Parks and Open Spaces³ (hectares)	All Public Parks and Open Spaces per 1000 residents (hectares)	% of Municipal Land Base
2016	80,017	212	2.65	11%	253	3.16	13%
2041	100,000	-	2.12	-	-	2.53	-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> BC comparison communities included Delta, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Abbotsford, and Saanich.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Basis of park land - has been obtained from the 2016 Inventory.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Basis of park land - has been obtained from the 2016 Inventory. Includes Federal, Provincial & Regional District Parks and Open Spaces, and School District 61 school sites.

As the urban density and population increase, demand for parks, open spaces, and outdoor amenities such as gathering and social spaces also increase.

Figure 3.3: Total Municipal Park Land by Neighbourhood

Figure 3.4: Municipal Park Land Per Capita by Neighbourhood

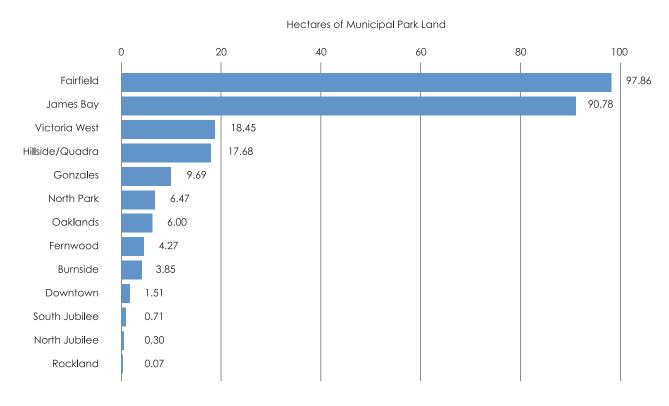
#### 3.4.1 SUPPLY OF PARKS PER CAPITA

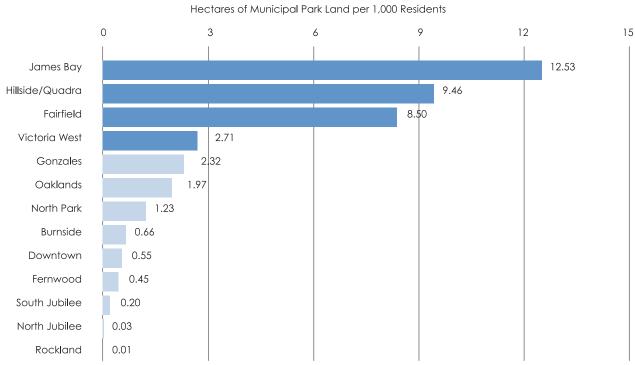
The following tables provide an analysis of the current and future municipal park land supply per capita for the City of Victoria overall and for each neighbourhood. The current park land provision within the City is 2.65 hectares of municipal parks and open spaces per 1,000 residents. This park land provision is lower than other similar sized communities in BC which have an average of 10.7 ha / 1,000 residents. This indicates that Victoria faces a significant challenge as a municipality that is largely built-out and experiencing increasing density.

## **Key Findings:**

 The City of Victoria would need to acquire 53 hectares of park land over the next 25 years, approximately 2 hectares per year, to maintain the current per-capita park land provision.

- Fairfield and James Bay are the neighbourhoods with the greatest amount of park land because of their proximity to Beacon Hill Park. Fairfield also includes Ross Bay Cemetery and Clover Point Park, and James Bay includes Holland Point Park.
- Victoria West and Hillside/
  Quadra also have significant
  areas of park land: Victoria
  West has three large parks
  including Banfield Park, Victoria
  West Park, and Songhees Park;
  Hillside/Quadra has Topaz Park
  and Summit Park.
- While park land is distributed across the city, only four of nine neighbourhoods are above the City-wide municipal park land per capita (2.65 ha/1,000 residents). North Park, Burnside, Downtown, Fernwood, South Jubilee, North Jubilee, and Rockland have less than half the City-wide municipal park land per capita.





## Figure 3.5: 400 metre radius from municipal parks

Figure 3.6: 400 metre radius from all parks and open spaces (City owned lands and non-City owned lands)

#### 3.4.2 ACCESS TO PARKS

The specific target identified in the OCP for measuring progress in terms of park land provision and access to parks uses a distance of 400 metres, as this is generally accepted as the distance that people will walk to a destination.

"OCP target: A minimum of 99% of Victorians have a park or open space within 400 metres of home by 2041."

An analysis of the proximity of Victoria residents to parks was completed to identify locations where new parks and open spaces need to be added to meet this target. Boulevards and other lands were considered within the park land inventory, but those that do not provide places to play, socialize, or enjoy nature were excluded from this analysis. An additional analysis was done to determine if the gaps identified in the distribution of municipal parks were addressed by any other public open spaces. The results of these analyses are shown on the figures below. Both maps show the eight proposed park locations identified in the OCP.

## **Key Findings:**

- If parks were added at all eight locations identified in the OCP, there would still be some key gaps in the City.
- The Rockland neighbourhood is deficient in City-owned parks, but does have Government House and Craigdarroch Castle. These spaces offer gardens and walking trails for residents. They do not have play spaces for children or areas that specifically promote neighbourhood socializing.
- There are gaps within the Burnside neighbourhood, but they are primarily within the commercial and industrial area in the southern portion of the neighbourhood. If a new park is pursued near Rock Bay, as specified in the OCP, this gap would largely be addressed.
- There are gaps in the North Jubilee, and South Jubilee neighbourhoods as many of the parks and open spaces in these neighbourhoods are smaller greens/boulevards associated with roadways. As part of the overall green infrastructure of the City, those park spaces are a valuable amenity and contribute to the City's character and urban forest, but they have very limited potential for other uses.





## Figure 3.7: Municipal playgrounds with Service Area Radii

Figure 3.8: Municipal playgrounds with Service Area Radii and Schools

## 40 playgrounds

## 3.5 Park Amenities

Victoria has a wide range of park amenities that provide opportunities for passive and active recreation, socializing, learning, celebrating and relaxing. The subsections below delve into more detail in terms of the inventory of playgrounds, sports fields and courts, dog parks, community gardens, waterfront areas and natural areas and sensitive habitats. Amenities in other parks and open spaces, such as school grounds, are not included in the inventory of City amenities, but have been considered in the analysis of supply gaps.

#### 3.5.1 PLAYGROUNDS

The City of Victoria currently has 40 playgrounds in the municipal parks system. The accessibility to playgrounds was evaluated using service area radii of 400 and 800 metres. Those within 400 metres are generally considered within easy walking distance (5 minutes).

While these radii are straight line distances, the actual service area for each playground varies depending on factors such as the quality and connectedness of the pedestrian route network and whether barriers exist. People may be willing to travel longer distances for specific features, higher quality or larger playgrounds.

## **Key Findings:**

- The main areas of the city that are not within walking distance of a municipal playground include Downtown and portions of Rockland, Fairfield, and Burnside.
- School sites provide additional playgrounds, although they are only available to the public after school hours and are usually designed only for the age groups present at the school.
- There is not currently a metric or goal for the provision of playgrounds.

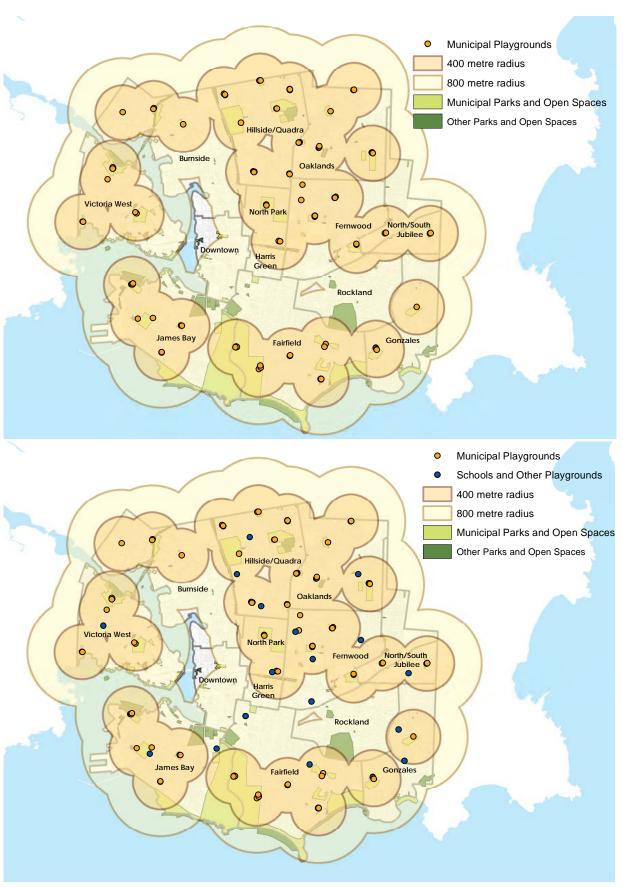


Figure 3.9: Municipal Sports Fields and Courts

Figure 3.10: Municipal Outdoor Fitness Equipment Locations





Table 3.2: Comparison of the supply of sports amenities to similar sized BC communities

#### 3.5.2 SPORTS FIELDS AND COURTS

The supply of sports fields and courts in Victoria was compared to six BC communities of comparable size<sup>4</sup>. These metrics do not include an analysis of the size or quality of the amenities, which can have a significant impact on the functional capacity. Although useful in terms of a rough comparison, each community has a variety of factors that affect the supply of park land and amenities, such as interest in various sports, development density, geography, land base, and proportion of natural areas.

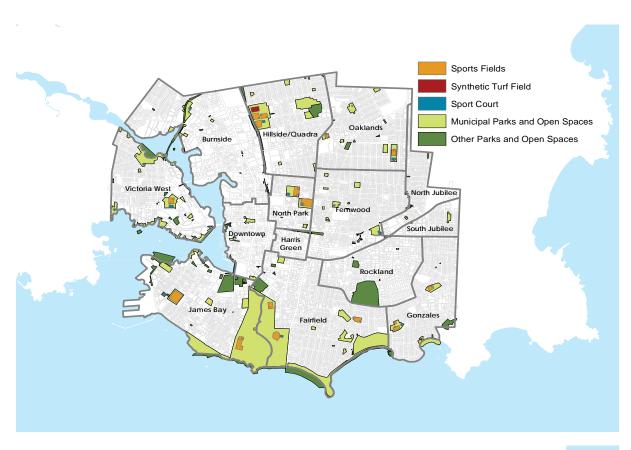
## Key findings:

 Compared to cities of a similar size, the City of Victoria is at or above average for most sports amenities, with the exception of skateboard parks, soccer/rugby fields and artificial turf fields.

- Most municipal fields are being used at maximum capacity.
- There is demand for upgrading fields to improve capacity and the user experience. Converting one or two existing grass fields to artificial turf could greatly increase capacity.
- Public school grounds help fill the gap of soccer/rugby fields with 9 additional fields, although there are no joint-use agreements in place. Currently there is some capacity on school fields, but fields are often smaller than needed, have lower maintenance levels, and are challenging to book.
- While the City is above average for baseball/softball fields, there are only a few that are suitable for adult slo-pitch, a growing sport.
- In addition to formal sports, there are also 5 outdoor fitness locations. This is a relatively new type of activity that is growing in popularity, but there is not good evidence as to their actual use.

Amenity/Facility	Average supply in comparison communities	City of Victoria
Baseball and softball fields	27	31
Outdoor baseketball courts	6	9
Skateboard parks	2	1
Outdoor soccer/rugby fields	23	15
Outdoor tennis courts	25	25
Artificial turf fields	3	1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> BC comparison communities included Delta, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Port Coquitlam, Abbotsford, and Saanich.



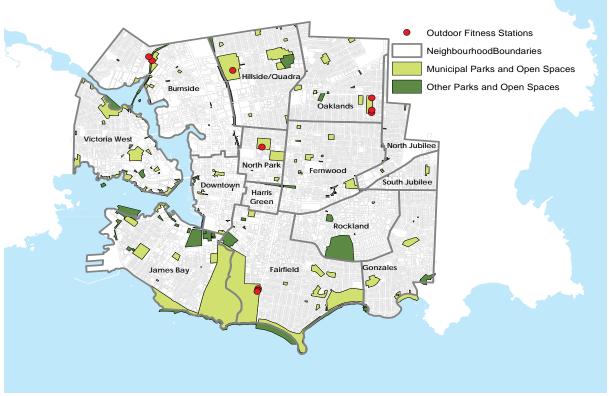




Table 3.3: Off-Leash Dog Areas in Other Communities<sup>6</sup>

## 3.5.3 OFF LEASH AREAS

There are currently 12 parks with off-leash areas within various neighbourhoods in the City, though not all neighbourhoods within Victoria are equipped with an off-leash area. The 'Paws in Parks' program ensures that each off-leash dog park has specific hours when dogs can be allowed off-leash. This accommodates the needs of owners to exercise their dogs while ensuring enjoyment of all park users<sup>5</sup>. All off-leash dog parks include signage, a dispenser

supplied with biodegradable doggie bags, and a garbage receptacle.

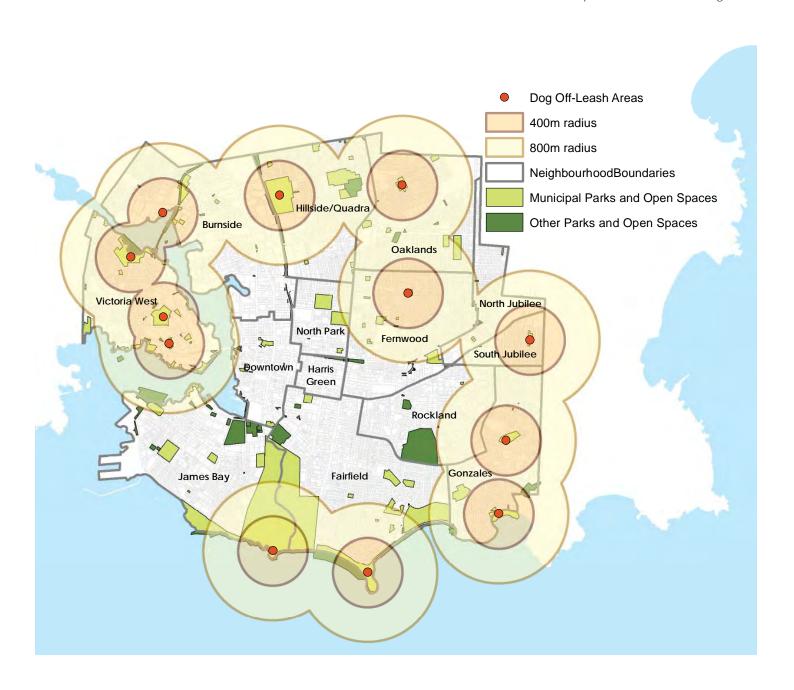
In 2015 there were 6,500 dogs licensed in Victoria. Based on 2014 data the top five dog breeds in Victoria were: Lab or Lab cross, Chihuahua, Golden Retriever, Shih Tzu and Jack Russell Terrier. Fairfield was the neighbourhood with the most licensed dogs at 802, while Victoria West had the highest percentage of homes with a dog at 50%.

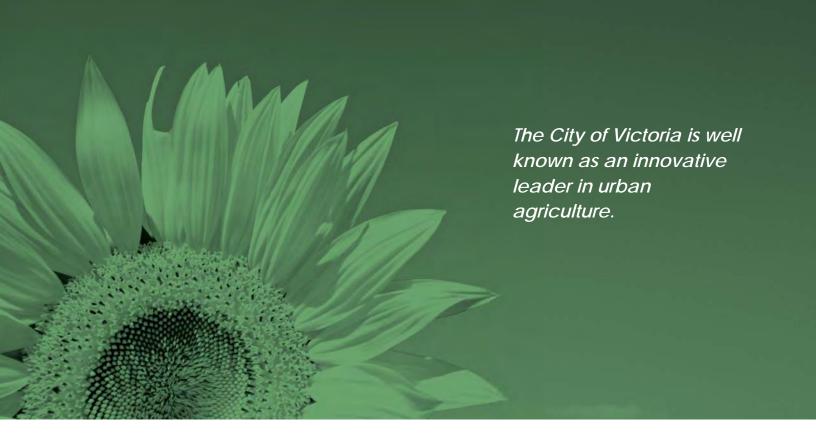
Community	Off-Leash Areas	Off-Leash Areas per 1,000 Residents	Fully Fenced Off-Leash Areas
City of Victoria	12	0.14	1
City of Nanaimo	12	0.14	1
City of Kamloops	15	0.18	3
City of Abbotsford	4	0.03	2
City of Port Coquitlam	2	0.04	2
Corporation of Delta	12	0.12	Data not available
	Average	0.11	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> City of Victoria 'Paws in Parks' Brochure

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Includes fenced or unfenced. The District of Saanich was excluded, as it allows dogs off-leash in all but 6 of its parks.

Figure 3.11: Municipal Off-Leash Areas for Dogs





## **Key Findings:**

- The City of Victoria is slightly above average in the number of off-leash areas per 1,000 residents compared with similar communities.
- There was public demand for fenced off-leash areas expressed through the public engagement process.
- There are no well-established metrics to guide the provision of dog parks. Municipalities must evaluate the demand for off-leash dog areas within the context of other demands for park amenities.
- All existing off-leash areas are located around the perimeter of the city with none in the central neighbourhoods (see Figure 3.11).

## 3.5.4 COMMUNITY GARDENS

The City of Victoria is well known as an innovative leader in urban agriculture. The City's Community Garden Policy was updated in 2016 and identifies three different types of community gardens: common gardens, which are harvested by all residents; allotment gardens, which include individual garden plots; and community orchards, which are groves of fruit or nut trees where the harvest is shared with the local community. Community gardens in the City are operated in partnership with a non-profit organization. There are eight community gardens located on Cityowned land. The City also maintains two edible demonstration gardens.

OCP policies target a minimum of one allotment garden per neighbourhood. Currently there are seven allotment gardens, two of which are within City parks: the Burnside Allotment Garden in Cecelia Ravine Park and the Neighbourhood Garden of All Sorts in MacDonald Park. The following table shows the inventory of allotment gardens by neighbourhood. Most of these gardens are not within the municipal parks system.

## **Key Findings:**

Neighbourhoods that do not currently have allotment gardens include:

- Fairfield,
- Gonzales,
- Hillside/Quadra,
- · North Park,
- · North/South Jubilee,
- · Oaklands, and
- Rockland.

- Despite not having allotment gardens, the neighbourhoods of Fairfield, Hillside/Quadra, North/ South Jubilee, and Rockland have commons gardens.
- The City completed an inventory and ranked City-owned lands with potential for community gardens. Numerous park sites were identified as have good potential for community gardens. These locations should be considered where there is local demand and where impacts to other park uses could be minimized.

**Allotment** Community Neighbourhood **Gardens** Gardens Orchards Burnside Downtown Fairfield Fernwood 2 Gonzales Hillside/Quadra 2 James Bay North Park North/South Jubilee Oaklands Rockland Victoria West

Table 3.4:
Community Gardens Inventory

## 3.5.5 NATURAL AREAS AND SENSITIVE HABITATS

Victoria is located in the rich and complex Coastal Douglas Fir Biogeoclimatic Zone, which is characterized by forests generally dominated by Douglas fir, but also including Western redcedar, grand fir, arbutus, Garry oak and red alder. The zone includes about 50 rare species, most of which are at the northern limit of their range. There have been significant losses to intact ecosystems as a result of logging, urban development, and invasive species.

Within the City's parks, there are 91 hectares (225 acres) of sensitive ecosystem areas (City of Victoria, 2016). These include Garry oak ecosystems, woodlands, cottonwood bog, Douglas fir forest, coastal bluffs, meadows and wetlands. The largest areas include the coastal bluffs at Finlayson Point; forests, woodlands, wetlands, and meadows in Beacon Hill Park; and Garry oak woodlands at Summit Park. Other natural areas include Cecelia Ravine Park, Moss Rocks Park, Robert J. Porter Park,

Banfield Park, Holland Point Park, and other shoreline areas. All of these sensitive ecosystems and natural areas contribute to the biodiversity of southern Vancouver Island, the City of Victoria, and the parks and open spaces system.

There are also sensitive ecosystem areas identified in non-municipal parks and open spaces including Government House (Provincial) and Gonzales Hill Park (CRD). The marine ecosystem surrounding the City is part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS) which is managed by the Canadian Wildlife Service (see Figure 3.13). The MBS is an important wildlife area that was established in 1923 to protect and conserve migratory birds. Over a four year period, 161 species of bird have been observed at Clover Point (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2017). The MBS affects the adjacent shorelines and uplands, including some of Victoria's municipal parks, as there are restrictions on disturbing habitat and nesting birds. Within the MBS, there is also a

Park natural areas are those areas of parks that contain a high percentage of native plants and provide habitat for wildlife.

Federal Marine Ecological Reserve with additional restrictions and protections for habitat and wildlife.

Natural areas create a unique landscape character that residents

impacts from adjacent land uses, climate change impacts, and invasive species as well as increasing numbers of people using the park system and environmental damage or degradation due to use.

City staff monitor the health of natural

In addition to the park management plans, other planning and policy documents guiding the City's overall efforts toward the protection of the natural environment include the 2012 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, the 2013 Urban Forest Master Plan, and the 2003 Greenways Plan.

and visitors recognize as distinct from any other place. They contribute to improved air quality, stormwater management, and climate regulation. They also provide valuable leisure opportunities for residents and visitors and economic benefits. Through the public engagement process, it was confirmed that residents highly value the natural areas in the city and support their protection and enhancement.

The primary threats to the remaining natural areas in the City are clearing, fragmentation, and degradation due to development, encroachment and

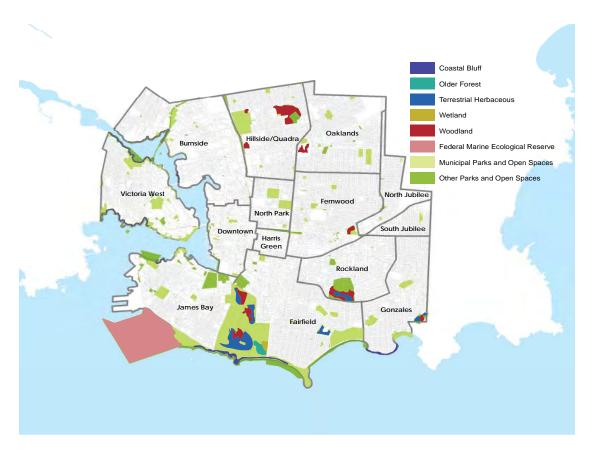
park areas and track endangered species populations. They also develop programs for staff and the public to raise awareness of environmental and conservation issues, work with volunteer groups to combat invasive species, and identify funding opportunities to support natural areas. With only two full time positions dedicated to accomplishing this work, it can be challenging to keep up with demands. There are several management plans for individual parks that focus on balancing protection of sensitive areas with the demand for active park space.

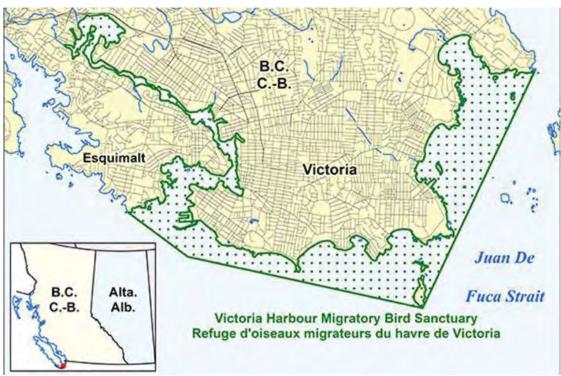
Figure 3.12: Victoria's Sensitive Ecosystems (2012 Official Community Plan)

Figure 3.13: Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary

## **Key Findings:**

- A majority of the significant sensitive environmental areas are located within parks and open spaces owned by the City or other public and government institutions. Private lands that have remnants of ecosystems, areas with restoration potential, and areas adjacent to existing park natural area should be identified and prioritized for potential future park land acquisition.
- Given the importance of natural areas to the public, increased investment in the monitoring and maintenance of existing natural areas and restoration of additional areas is needed. In an urban context, natural areas are under considerable pressure from impacts and encroachment of adjacent land uses, narrow or absent buffers, unsanctioned trails, and invasive species. Identification of the biggest problems can be addressed directly, but may also need to be addressed with a public education and outreach campaign (example: yard waste dumping).
- A balance between preservation of natural areas and providing opportunities for access is essential to the sustainability of natural areas in parks and open spaces. Public feedback showed support for protecting and increasing natural areas in the parks and open spaces system.
- Communication, knowledge sharing and coordinated planning with stewardship groups, municipal and regional governments, educational institutions and others will continue to be an important tool in the maintenance and management of natural areas in parks and open spaces.
- Investing in volunteer programs, particularly those that are episodic and require only a short-term time commitment, can result in substantial increases in number of volunteer participants and the value of their contributions.





## **CHAPTER**



# Public Engagement

Public engagement was an essential component guiding the development of this plan. The goal was to gather meaningful input that would allow the creation of a strategic direction for the parks system that accurately reflects the community's values.

The public engagement process included a wide range of tools, some targeted at specific stakeholder groups and others seeking to gather input from the general public. The stakeholders, partners, and community organizations who were engaged included Island Health Authority, the Greater Victoria School District, Tourism Victoria, the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, Victoria's Green Team, and representatives from adjacent municipalities.

Overall the number of people estimated to have actively participated to date is approximately 1,600. This number does not include the significant number of people who were reached through the pop-up events and other forms of communication and publicity.

## Public Engagement Goals

- Develop community-led vision, goals and values
- Identify current demand and future needs
- Develop awareness and support for the final plan
- Promote the City's parks and open spaces

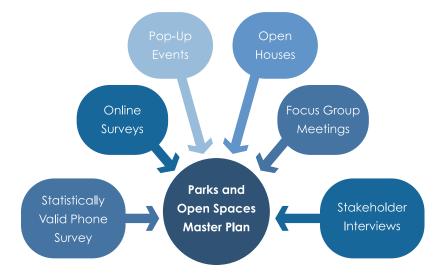


Figure 4.1:
Public Engagement Methods

### 4.1 What We Heard

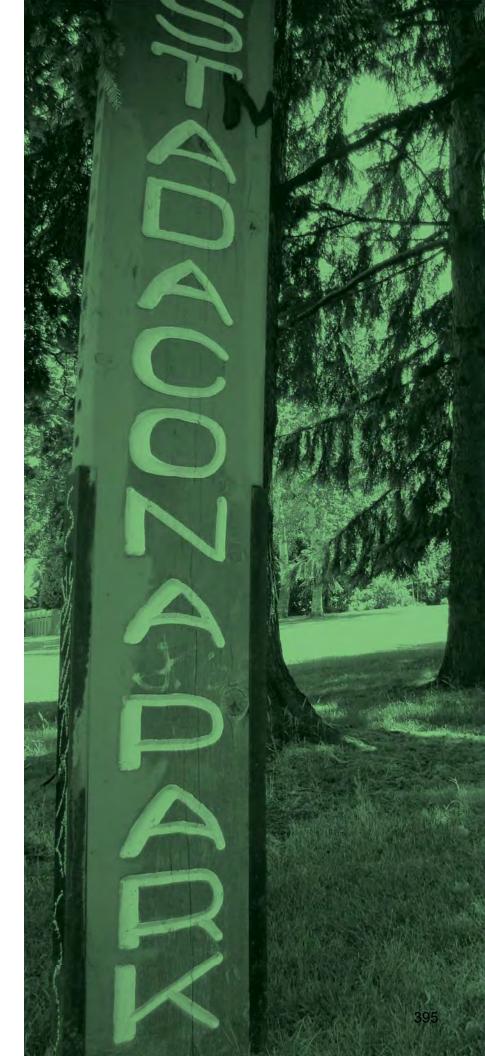
The following were common themes that emerged through all the public engagement methods.

- Overall satisfaction with Victoria's parks and open spaces is very high with 90% of residents at least 'somewhat' satisfied and 60% 'very' satisfied. Satisfaction levels were lower in the online survey respondents, but were still high with 85% 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied.
- Pathways are the most appreciated park amenity.
   Other amenities of note include natural areas, park washrooms, unprogrammed green space, children's play spaces, and waterfront/beach areas.
- Victoria residents value the environmental features, natural areas, and ecosystems within the City's parks and open spaces system and would like to see more of them.
- Preserving and improving the environmental features and benefits arose as the highest priority through multiple engagement methods.
- Residents value flexible outdoor spaces that can accommodate a range of

- uses. There is a leaning toward more unprogrammed spaces in the parks and open spaces system. Related to this, there is a desire for more diversity in parks including social spaces and quiet, meditative spaces.
- There is support for improving parks and open spaces by adding more inclusive spaces and designs that are accessible and accommodate a range of ages, abilities and needs.
- Spaces to play are important, particularly for children and youth, but also places for families to play together. There are opportunities to incorporate a wider variety of amenities for all ages. For example, the youth focus group revealed that youth mostly use public plazas and seating areas as opposed to parks and green spaces.
- Residents want improvements at existing parks and open spaces to be a priority including adequate maintenance, washrooms, safety, drinking fountains, and other support amenities. This was highlighted in multiple engagement methods.
- Satisfaction is weakest for offleash dog areas and outdoor

fitness equipment, but for a variety of reasons. Desire for more washrooms was cited frequently, although some also expressed concern that washrooms encourage inappropriate park uses (i.e. camping). There were some requests for more off-leash areas for dogs, including fenced areas, while others cited conflicts between off-leash dogs and other park users. While there were a few requests for more outdoor fitness equipment, others cited that some existing fitness equipment did not seem to be well-used.

 When asked what amenities are missing or need improvement, most residents had no suggestions. Among desired changes, having 'more' of the following was mentioned frequently: more parks/ green space or natural areas, washroom facilities, off-leash dog areas and shared-use pathways (cycling, walking, etc.).





### STATISTICALLY VALID PHONE SURVEY

A statistically valid phone survey was completed by Mustel Group Market Research in June 2016. A total of 403 interviews were conducted by telephone over a random selection of residents 15 years of age or over. Survey participants were representative of the population as a whole, as well as geographically representative of the City's neighbourhoods. The margin of error on the sample is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence interval.

The phone survey provides the City with a reliable source of data that is representative of the city population as a whole, including "non-users" whose input cannot be captured through other means.

#### 4.1.1 COMMUNITY VALUES

Twelve value statements, as listed in Table 3.1, were tested across the phone survey, online survey and the first public open house. Respondents were asked how important each statement was in guiding the future of Victoria's park system: very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important. All 12 were considered somewhat or very important by a majority of residents (70% or more), but the most important value was:

"Protecting and highlighting natural areas and environmental stewardship".

Three-quarters of residents believe this objective is 'very important' and nearly everyone agreed that this is an important guideline. Several other objectives are 'very important' to at least half/almost half of residents, but standing out are:

- "addressing climate change" (64% very important), and
- "encouraging community gardening and local food production" (61% very important).

Table 3.1: Public Responses to the Draft Community Values Criteria

Community Value	Phone Survey % Very or Somewhat Important	Online Survey % Very or Somewhat Important
Protect and highlight natural areas and environmental stewardship	98%	95%
Provide informal spaces for picnics and socializing	93%	89%
Ensure access to the water and promote marine recreation	92%	89%
Encourage community gardening and local food production	89%	76%
Beautify the community	88%	88%
Address climate change	88%	80%
Highlight the cultural heritage of the community	86%	71%
Improve safety	84%	69%
Create unique, attractive places	84%	87%
Expand the range of amenities and potential uses in parks	82%	72%
More organized events and festivals in parks	71%	61%
Provide dog off-leash areas and trails	70%	59%

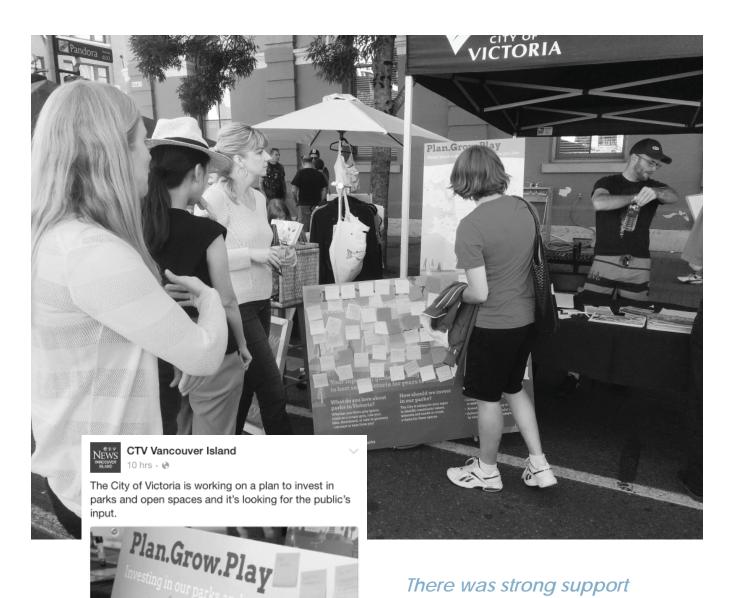
#### 4.1.2 DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

There was strong support for the Draft Vision and Goals, with over 75% of respondents strongly supporting or somewhat supporting all of the goals.

Questions about some of the key actions were asked in order to gather more information and to help determine the highest priorities. Below are some of the key finding, with additional details provided in Appendix B.

- When asked what should be prioritized for park land acquisition, the top three priorities were land with sensitive ecosystems, waterfront sites for parks and pathways, and locations that more equally distribute parks in all neighbourhoods.
- Of the options for social spaces or new seating, quiet seating areas at viewpoints were the top choice (56% of respondents), followed by areas with lighting (41%) and covered group picnic areas (33%).
- In preparation for development of a Dogs in Parks Strategy, the survey asked what issues related to dogs in parks were the most important. The top three issues were rules and etiquette for park use (49%), defining off-leash

- boundaries and fencing (46%), and waste management (42%). Specific locations and design features for off-leash areas were lower priority (39%).
- Overall, 64% of respondents said they strongly support or somewhat support the recommended action to amend the Park Regulation Bylaw to allow limited commercial activities in parks.
- Open House attendees supported increasing natural areas and showed strong support for achieving this by replacing ornamental flower beds and lawns with native plants.
- Open House attendees strongly supported having allotment gardens in City parks (32 support/7 don't support).
- Specific types and locations of new amenities in parks will be determined through more detailed planning and design at the neighbourhood level, but there was strong support for another water/spray park (24 support/1 don't support), more bike features (21 support/1 don't support), and outdoor fitness equipment (17 support/1 don't support) from those who attended the Open House.



There was strong support for the Draft Vision and Goals, with over 75% of respondents strongly supporting or somewhat supporting all of the goals.

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Victoria parks

Community input to guide future investments in

### **CHAPTER**



# Vision

The following vision statement has been developed in response to public input and the City's strategic directions.

Victoria's parks and open spaces system is dynamic, vibrant, playful, sustainable, inclusive, and diverse. It engages residents and visitors with the unique ecosystems, culture, and character of the city, supports health and wellness for all, and protects natural areas as a vital resource.

## 5.1 Goals, Objectives and Actions

#### GOAL 1: Protect the Environment

Parks and open spaces protect and improve native ecosystems and help the city adapt to climate change.

### GOAL 2: Foster Engaging Experiences for Everyone

Parks and open spaces provide a range of different experiences, encourage active living, and are multifunctional, inclusive, and accessible.

#### **GOAL 3: Celebrate Victoria**

Special places and amenities in parks and open spaces animate the city and support events for both residents and visitors.

### GOAL 4: Strengthen Partnerships

Community members, stewards, and partners help enhance all parks and open spaces in the city.

# GOAL 1: PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Parks and open spaces protect and improve native ecosystems and help the city adapt to climate change.

Sensitive ecosystems and natural areas are an important part of the biodiversity of southern Vancouver Island, the City of Victoria, and the parks and open spaces system. They create a unique landscape character that residents and visitors recognize as distinct from any other place. Sensitive ecosystems and natural areas also provide numerous benefits such as climate regulation and stormwater management. Protecting and enhancing natural areas was the highest priority of

citizens, and it continued to be highlighted as an issue of great importance to residents throughout the public engagement process.

The objectives and actions for this goal will help achieve the City's 2041 Vision as described in the Official Community Plan which states that "Victoria is an urban sustainability leader inspiring innovation, pride and progress towards greater ecological integrity....".

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We strive to be leaders in sustainable landscape planning, design, development, operations, and maintenance and share our expertise to improve landscapes city-wide.
- We recognize the importance of native ecosystems to biodiversity, resilience, sense of place, and quality of life.
- We recognize the importance of addressing climate change and incorporate mitigation and adaptation actions throughout the planning, design, development, operations, and maintenance of the parks system.
- We recognize the valuable knowledge and passion of environmental stewardship groups and local naturalists.

#### Objective 1.1

Increase protection and enhancement of native ecosystems in parks and open spaces across the city

#### **ACTIONS**

#### 1.1.1 Develop a Biodiversity Strategy

The Urban Forest Master Plan recommends the development of a Biodiversity Strategy that includes measurable objectives for the protection, recovery or enhancement of sensitive ecosystems, species at risk and other important flora and fauna. The Biodiversity Strategy should be a coordinated effort with other City departments and should include engagement with other key land owners and adjacent jurisdictions. Some of the specific components to be included are:

- An inventory of sensitive ecosystems, species at risk, and regionally significant habitat corridors;
- Strategies to protect areas on Cityowned and private-lands;
- An inventory of opportunities to improve and restore ecosystem patches and habitat corridors;
- A prioritized action plan;
- A list of key partners and partnership actions; and
- A monitoring plan to track changes and measure success.



Open house attendees supported the following strategies for increasing the amount of natural areas in parks:

- Expand existing natural areas;
- Replace ornamental flower beds with native plants; and
- Replace lawns with native plants.

### 1.1.2 Continue to implement the Urban Forest Master Plan.

There are many recommendations in the Urban Forest Master Plan that apply to parks and open spaces such as the development of an Urban Forest Action Plan and a Tree Risk Management Program for public trees.

# 1.1.3 Develop targets for increasing the use of native plants and the quantity and quality of native ecosystems.

As part of the Biodiversity Strategy or through a more detailed implementation plan, a set of "ecosystem templates" should be developed that outline key site condition requirements and provide a list of species and the relative proportions of plants for each ecosystem type. It is also recommended that specific targets be set to:

- increase the variety of native plant species planted in parks and open spaces (considering all areas, including hanging baskets, plazas and gardens);
- increase the proportion of native ecosystems in the parks and open spaces system; and
- restore native ecosystem areas that are currently degraded.











#### Objective 1.2

# Improve sustainability and ecosystem services

Parks and open spaces offer a wide range of ecosystem services such as erosion protection, support of biodiversity, reduction of the heat island effect, reduction of stormwater runoff, filtration of rainfall, and improvements to air quality. Parks planning, design and operations should seek ways to demonstrate sustainable practices and increase the inherent benefits of parks and open spaces.

#### **ACTIONS**

1.2.1 Update the Environmental Management Standards for park operations and maintenance that will increase the resilience of parks and open spaces.

The goal of the Environmental Management Standards is to increase the value of the ecosystem services and increase the ability of the parks and open spaces system to recover quickly from stresses by establishing or updating existing maintenance and operations standards and methodologies for topics such as:

- · Integrated pest management;
- Invasive species management;
- Reduction of GHG Emissions;
- Sustainable materials;
- · Soil management;
- · Horticultural practices;
- Natural areas management; and
- · Irrigation.

# 1.2.2 Create demonstration projects showcasing best practices for sustainability within the parks system.

Demonstrating best practices and trying innovative ideas in the parks system provides a wide range of educational and training opportunities and demonstrates City's commitment sustainability principles. examples of practices that can be demonstrated in the parks system include green waste collection and composting, a wide range of recycling opportunities, rain gardens and other soil and plantbased stormwater management. Where this or other actions are implemented in the parks system, consider the incorporation of signage that highlights describes the practices being demonstrated and points people toward additional resources.

## 1.2.3 Identify opportunities to daylight or celebrate culverted streams.

Daylighting streams that have previously been confined underground pipes can result in water quality improvements, flooding reduction, increased aquatic habitat and native ecosystems, and community and economic revitalization. The feasibility of daylighting streams is challenging in an urban environment. In the short term, the emphasis will need to be on highlighting and celebrating culverted streams through signage, events or small interventions. Fully daylighting a stream is costly and requires a long term plan, engineering studies and potential land acquisition. Having a plan in place will allow the City to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

Two specific opportunities have been identified: Bowker Creek and Rock Bay Creek, but others may arise. The Capital Regional District is currently coordinating the Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative with the City of Victoria as a partner.

#### ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

The concept of ecosystem services focuses attention on the ways that humans benefit from and depend on, both directly and indirectly, natural process within healthy, functioning ecosystems. Ecosystems support life, security and quality of life by providing benefits such as production of oxygen and food, mitigation of extreme weather events, and support for psychological well-being (Value of Nature to Canadians Study Taskforce, 2017).



#### Objective 1.3

### Mitigate and adapt to climate change

Parks and open spaces will be impacted by climate change, but can also help the city adapt. Action needs to be taken now to identify risks and to develop strategies to mitigate impacts and boost the city's resilience.

#### **ACTIONS**

1.3.1 Incorporate more vegetation in areas of the city most vulnerable to the urban heat island effect.

Urban areas absorb and re-radiate heat from buildings, vehicles and paved areas, making some urban environments over degrees warmer than surrounding undeveloped areas. Urban heat islands can exacerbate summer heat waves and have the greatest impact on vulnerable populations including the elderly and young children. Parks and trees can help alleviate the heat island effect because vegetation absorbs heat and disbands heat accumulation; vegetation cools the air through evapotranspiration; streams and other waterbodies cool the atmosphere as water evaporates; and trees provide shade that offer relief from the sun.

To strategically address the urban heat island effect, overlay vegetation data with vulnerable population data to identify key areas and then seek ways to incorporate more shade trees and other vegetation in those areas.

1.3.2 Use vegetation to shade impervious areas and buildings to reduce the heat island effect and consider green roofs on park buildings and shelters.

In addition to targeting the most vulnerable areas of the city, addressing impervious areas and buildings throughout the parks system will help reduce the urban heat island effect. Impervious areas and buildings are major contributors to the heat island effect because they absorb and re-radiate heat which leads to increased localize temperatures. Shading large areas of asphalt (e.g., parking lots) and planting green roofs and walls reduce the amount of heat that these surfaces generate. There are also potential added benefits of reduced pollution from vehicles and the potential to have the vegetation be part of a rainwater management system, particularly evergreen species (Gye Associates Ltd, 2013).

# 1.3.3 Identify plants and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change and develop management strategies to help mitigate impacts.

The Urban Forest Master Plan noted that many plant species are already in decline due to prolonged drought conditions resulting from climate change. While trees have been the primary focus so far, other plants are also being affected and will need to be addressed. This action could be integrated into the Biodiversity Strategy.

#### 1.3.4 Identify marine shorelines within the parks system that are vulnerable to climate change impacts and develop mitigation strategies.

Waterfront parks and open spaces are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and some areas will be more impacted than others. Identifying vulnerable areas, developing a tool box of mitigation strategies and then prioritizing actions will help protect the shoreline. Tracking changes at these locations is also recommended to allow for adaptive management.

### 1.3.5 Reduce impervious surfaces, particularly along the waterfront.

Much of Victoria's waterfront has been impacted by human uses and infrastructure, but there are many opportunities to restore impacted areas within the parks system to prioritize native ecosystems and park areas over parking and pavement. Restoration to natural conditions can help improve the resiliency to the impacts of sea level rise and storm surges. It can also help improve the ability of those shorelines to buffer adjacent upland areas while also increasing the habitat values for vulnerable species.

# 1.3.6 Explore the potential to complete a Green Shores shoreline restoration project.

The City of Victoria can continue its leadership in sustainability and improving ecological integrity by undertaking a shoreline restoration program that meets the criteria outlined in the Green Shores Coastal Development Rating System (Green Shores CDRS) which is a program of the Stewardship Centre for BC. The Green Shores CDRS promotes healthy shore environments and encourages project designs that work with the natural features and functions of coastal ecosystems. The benefits include reduced risk to shorelines, property and infrastructure, and opportunities to improve connections between residents and the marine shoreline. The program requires that a project design achieve a certain number of points using a credit system similar to that for LEED. Examples of urban park shoreline restoration projects using the Green Shores CDRS include Jericho Beach in Vancouver.







#### Parks, urban forests and climate change

Parks and open spaces can help cities adapt to climate change by providing habitat, connecting ecosystems, managing stormwater, protecting floodplains, reduce flooding and impacts of flooding, and opportunities for public education around climate change. Use of parks may change as well, with more use during heat waves and greater demand for more shade (West Coast Environmental Law, 2012).

The British Columbia Ministry of
Community, Sport and Cultural
Development has published a guide
to help B.C. communities to better
utilize the capacity of their urban
forests in adapting to climate change.

Best practices include the following

 Placing groves of large-leaved tree and shrubs upwind of heat island areas, so that evapotranspiration from the vegetation will create cooler, moister air that blows into the 'hot spots'.

- Planting green roofs and green walls, which help to cool the air through evapotranspiration of plants.
- Shading large areas of asphalt (e.g., parking lots), which reduces polluting emissions from cars, extends the life of the asphalt, as well as providing a more pleasant environment for parking. In winter, these trees and their roots can be designed to be part of the rainwater management system.
- Planting evergreen species where managing stormwater is a prime concern, to maximize water uptake during the raining seasons.
- Making it easy for water to soak into the ground, through raingardens (especially with trees), or where a generous unpaved area has been left around the trunk area (perhaps planted with shrubs).
- Reducing windfall risks by ensuring that trees are windfirm.
- Selecting tree species that are adapted to anticipated future

# GOAL 2: FOSTER ENGAGING EXPERIENCES FOR EVERYONE

The parks and open spaces system meets current and future needs of Victoria residents, provides a range of different experiences, encourages active living and is multi-functional, inclusive and accessible.

The parks and open spaces system must be adaptive to meet the changing needs of residents. Among the most critical factors to address are the increasing population and higher densities in some areas, the aging population, the desire to attract families, changes in demand

and new activities, the desire for programmed and unprogrammed, quiet spaces and the challenge of expanding the parks and open spaces system in a largely built-out and geographically constrained city.

The objectives and actions in this section strive to protect and maintain existing parks and opens spaces while expanding inventory in keeping with increasing population demand; minimizing barriers; and, expanding and encouraging social connection, active living and inclusivity.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We take pride in providing a safe, well-maintained park system that is improved over time.
- We recognize the increasing pressure on park lands and continually strive to use space efficiently and to create multifunctional, flexible spaces to meet changing demands.
- We strive to improve parks for all residents, particularly those who are currently underserved.
- We strive to increase the accessibility of the parks and open spaces system by considering a broad range of accessibility issues at the outset of all park planning and design projects.
- We recognize the importance of parks and open spaces as part of the active transportation system.
- We will continue to engage a wide variety of people through the local area planning process and development of individual park plans to ensure residents' ideas, concerns and needs are heard.

#### Objective 2.1:

# Parks and amenities are equitably distributed and well maintained.

Overall, the city is well-supplied with parks and open spaces for the current population. However, some neighbourhoods are underserved, and as the population increases the pressure put on existing parks will increase. New park lands will need to be acquired to meet increasing demand.

Similarly, the level of maintenance required to keep existing parks in good repair will increase. The City of Victoria is striving to provide parks and amenities equitably across the city, ensuring that all residents can reap the wide range of benefits that they provide. Improvements to parks that improve the sense of safety can also increase the range of residents who are comfortable in parks and open spaces.

The following actions are aimed at protecting and improving the parks and open spaces that already exist and planning for an expansion of the parks and open spaces system to meet future demand.

#### **ACTIONS**

2.1.1 Update and/or consolidate the City's land use policies related to park land designation including consolidating park properties with multiple titles, updating the OCP with the current inventory and developing park zoning designations within the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.

Within the City of Victoria, there are several different ways that the tenure of park land is secured. These include: identification as Parks and Open Space in the Official Community Plan; reservation by by-law; designation by municipal or Provincial authority; trust agreements; and, covenants.

The City of Victoria does not currently have parks specific zones in the Zoning Regulation Bylaw. While park status is already secured through the Official Community Plan, developing a specific zone for parks will help to clarify park land regulation.

2.1.2 Develop a Park and
Development Acquisition Strategy,
develop and maintain a list of
priority park land acquisitions.
Coordinate with the Local Area
Plan process.

Approximate locations for eight new parks have already been identified in the OCP based on the 400m guideline. Park land is also expected to be acquired through the development process by dedication at subdivision, rezoning, and density bonusing for amenities. The OCP has identified that a Park Acquisition Strategy is needed to define tools, targets and potential sites. It also outlines several priority park land acquisitions, including waterfront areas, large sites suitable for community parks, and areas around designated Urban Villages and Town Centres.

Expanding the parks and open spaces system in the City of Victoria over the next 10-20 years will be challenging due to the limited amount of undeveloped land, the limited amount of land suitable for parks, competition with other land use needs, and increasing land values. Given these limitations, it is important to develop a Park Acquisition Strategy that includes:

Guidelines for acquiring new park, open space and trail lands. Parks should:

- Have topography and natural features suited to the intended uses:
- Be convenient to the populations they serve;
- Be compatible with adjoining land uses;

- Be safe and accessible; and
- Create connections and key linkages.

Based on the public engagement for this plan, the following should be prioritized:

- Acquisition of land that has ecological values and sensitive ecosystems or species;
- Acquisition of sites that will enable informal uses such as socializing and picnicking;
- Acquisition of sites identified in local area plans and in park deficient neighbourhoods;
- Consideration of additional lands needed for community allotment gardens;
- Consideration of lands necessary to daylight culverted streams;
- Consideration of lands required to fill gaps in the Greenways Plan and to ensure parks are linked to the active transportation system; and,
- Consideration of access to lands for other recreational uses including play spaces.

Strategies for acquisition such as purchase, establishing first rights of refusal, interagency land transfers, joint use agreements, leases, easements and rights-of-way.

# 2.1.3 Implement a life-cycle analysis framework to ensure accurate forecasting and planning for significant maintenance, upgrades, repairs, and replacement of park amenities.

Life-cycle analyses should establish the current condition and capacity of park amenities, determine deficiencies and short-term repair needs, and forecast a timeline for major repairs/upgrades and estimated life-span for each. This will allow for long-term budget planning to ensure a high level of maintenance and consistent level of service.

### 2.1.4 Adopt park design guidelines for park furniture and amenities.

Park Design Guidelines will establish a reference for standards and design requirements that can be used in park assessments and during the park development or redevelopment process. The guidelines should include:

 Universal accessibility guidelines for common amenities such as pathways, playgrounds, water fountains, seating and picnic tables, etc.



- A catalog of standard park furniture and amenities, including a basic "kit of parts" for amenities that are needed at most parks; and
- An implementation program
  to upgrade and replace park
  furnishings and amenities with
  accessible options that sets
  priorities, timelines, and budget
  requirements to make the parks
  and open spaces system more
  barrier-free.

# 2.1.5 Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, drinking fountains, lighting and food services at select parks.

The previous action to develop a "kit of parts" should be followed up with an assessment of existing parks to determine which are in need of these amenities and plan for park upgrades. Additional consideration

should be given to determining which parks may benefit from washrooms, lighting, and food services such as community ovens or outdoor barbeques. Other actions related to this include identification of parks suitable for hosting various sizes of events and incorporation of event support infrastructure.

# 2.1.6 Establish a list of priority improvement projects to address safety issues and other barriers to park use.

Safety issues and other barriers can be identified and prioritized through analysis of reports from the Victoria Police Department, Calls for Service submitted to the City and other reports, on-site assessments, and consultation with the Accessibility Working Group, seniors, new Canadians, and other target populations. This list should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

#### Objective 2.2:

# Expand the variety of experiences and activities within the parks and open spaces system.

The parks and open spaces system will be under increasing pressure to serve a diverse array of purposes and to meet changing demands within a finite land base. Current lifestyle trends are toward denser urban areas, smaller living spaces, with an increase in the number of people living alone. This is leading people to use parks and open spaces more for casual social gatherings and to the recognition that parks and open spaces can help combat social isolation.

#### **ACTIONS**

# 2.2.1 Identify existing underutilized spaces and develop a strategy for how to encourage broader use.

There is a need to maximize efficient use of parks and open spaces and to improve the multifunctionality wherever possible, keeping in mind that natural areas and flexible open spaces remain high priorities. Examples include adding lines on sport courts to allow more activities, improving circulation to

reduce remnants or inaccessible areas; creatively incorporating food production; adding art, creative seating areas, small skate features, or playful elements.

#### 2.2.2 Incorporate a variety of spaces for socializing and group gatherings into park spaces.

Informal spaces for picnics and socializing was identified as the second most important community value in the Parks and Open Spaces survey. Outdoor socials spaces are particularly important amenities for new Canadians and youth. By incorporating more of these spaces, the parks system will become more inclusive and enlivened. Social spaces can also be great locations to incorporate public art and features that celebrate the city. Examples of types of social spaces include:

- Informal seating areas for 3-6 people;
- Informal seating areas for 6-10 people;
- Spectator seating at sports fields and courts;
- Covered group picnic shelters;
- Seating areas around a public art or interpretive feature;
- Paved plaza areas for community festivals, markets, and events; and
- Areas with electricity and lighting to allow outdoor gatherings yearround.



# 2.2.3 Develop areas in the parks and open spaces system that encourage mental restoration and relaxation.

Parks offer an important respite from the urban landscape and provide opportunities for people to connect with nature and relax. Spaces should include a variety of paths and seating areas at viewpoints, within natural areas, and in gardens that are quiet, comfortable, and restorative.

#### 2.2.4 Develop a Dogs in Parks Strategy that builds off of the experiences of the existing Paws in Parks Program.

Dog owners and their pets are a large user group of park spaces. Pets often provide the impetus for people to visit parks, to exercise, and to socialize with others while

visiting the park. However, dogs in parks can cause conflicts with other park users. Providing off-leash facilities in specific areas can help to reduce those conflicts.

There are twelve parks with offleash dog areas currently in the city. However, there were requests for more dog off-leash areas, particularly fenced areas.

A Dogs in Parks Strategy would include:

- an assessment of demand;
- an evaluation of conflicts and issues;
- strategies to address conflicts and issues;
- specific recommendations for improvements to park amenities for dogs; and
- identification of the appropriate balance between dog-oriented amenities and other park uses.

#### Objective 2.3:

Parks and open spaces offer a wide variety of activity spaces that contribute to the health and wellness of residents and engage youth and children.

There is increasing evidence that parks are essential to personal health and encourage active living, which is a key determinant of health and well-being. As Victoria's population ages, it will be important to support older adults to stay active. Children

also need support to stay healthy and to develop their social, cognitive and physical abilities. Opportunities for active play and connecting to nature are important tools to combat rising obesity rates, anxiety and social isolation across the age spectrum.

#### **ACTIONS**

2.3.1 Identify new health and fitness cluster locations where outdoor fitness amenities, walking areas, playgrounds, and sports amenities are located near each other.

By clustering amenities, multiple family members can be active at the same time and location. This action also coordinates with the "Build Partnerships" action to work with Island Health and other municipalities and stakeholders to identify projects that enhance active living.

2012 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN OBJECTIVE:

"Enhance child- and youth-friendly parks and recreational facilities, services, and programs in the city, to promote a healthy community and to help attract and retain households with children."

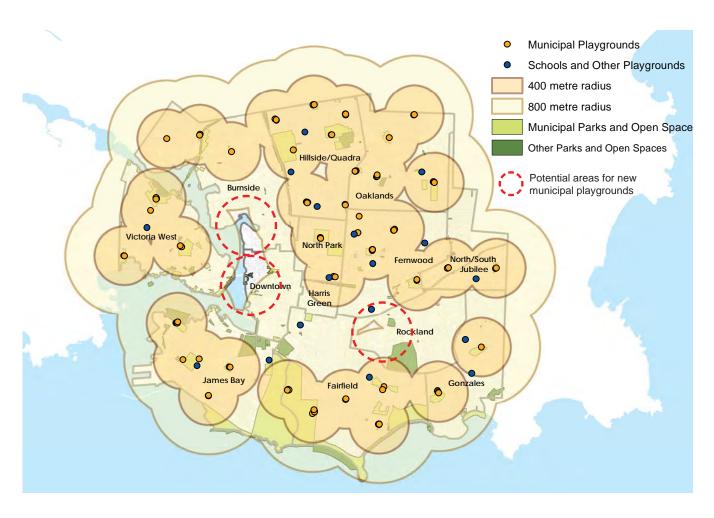


Figure 5.1:

Approximate locations for new municipal playgrounds or play features

# 2.3.2 Establish a target for the provision of play spaces within an800 meters walking distance of 99% of households.

The main areas of the city that are not within walking distance of a playground include Burnside and Downtown. Figure 5.1 shows general areas where the addition of playgrounds would address existing walkability gaps. Secondary areas that could also be considered for playgrounds in the future include central Rockland, North Jubilee, and the SE area of Victoria West.

School sites help address some of the gaps in the distribution of playgrounds, but they are not accessible to the public during school hours, only serve specific age groups, and do not have secure tenure. Further discussions regarding the locations and types of playgrounds that are needed should be done through the local area planning process and the park redevelopment process. In areas where gaps are identified, when limited land allows for construction of a new playground, the City should consider the development of smaller play points within existing City-owned lands.

# 2.3.3 Establish and maintain standards of care to ensure safe, high quality and creative play features.

Playgrounds will be included in the life-cycle assessment framework. As a rule-of-thumb, playgrounds should be evaluated every 15 years to determine upgrade and replacement needs. A rolling schedule is recommended to ensure that playgrounds are keep up to date with safety requirements, trends and demand.

# 2.3.4 Identify a location for a new all ages and abilities accessible water/spray park.

There are two water/spray park features, both at Beacon Hill Park, but demand for more water play features was highlighted in the public engagement results. The northeast area of the city should be considered for a new water/spray park because of the limited access to the beaches and waterfront areas. There may also be other opportunities to incorporate small, interactive water features at other locations to help draw people to and animate underutilized spaces.

#### 2.3.5 Develop an All-Wheels Strategy.

An All-Wheels Strategy is recommended to identify the demand and specific needs of skateboarders and other similar activities such as BMX, roller skating, in-line skating, scootering as well as

youth bike skills areas. It should include public and stakeholder engagement; identification of amenity typologies, site requirements, and potential locations; actions related to programming, operations, maintenance; and strategic partnerships.

#### 2.3.6 Identify a location and develop a second skate park that allows for a variety of activities (i.e. roller blading, scooters, and BMX inclusive), ages and abilities.

While the All-Wheels Strategy will provide an overall approach, it was identified through the public consultation process that there is demand for a second skills facility. It should serve a variety of uses and include a beginner area where children can safely learn and more advanced areas where beginners can watch more experienced riders.

## 2.3.7 Develop a process to evaluate and assess demand for new/emerging activities.

Demand for activities will change over the timeline of this plan, and the parks and open spaces system should strive to provide a range of different activities to engage residents. New/emerging activities include disc golf, pickleball, field lacrosse, and, rugby. Requests for new or enhanced amenities will need to be considered within the context of this plan which places higher priority on providing unprogrammed open spaces and more native ecosystems.

Establish and maintain standards of care to ensure safe, high quality and creative play features.









#### Objective 2.4:

# Improve and maximize the utility of existing sports amenities.

Given the range of different demands on the parks system, the overall approach for meeting demand for organized sports is to prioritize making the most of existing amenities and strategizing on how to improve multifunctionality of those amenities. Demand for additional amenities may be identified, but those demands should be carefully weighed against the priorities of increasing natural areas and providing flexible open spaces.

#### **ACTIONS**

### 2.4.1 Develop a Sports and Facility Development Strategy.

A Sports and Facility Development Strategy would provide guidance on field and court sport planning and investment, in collaboration with sports leagues and clubs, School District 61, and adjacent municipalities, and other stakeholders. Content may include but is not limited to:

- Assessment of the current condition and capacity of existing sports fields and courts;
- Determination of existing and future demand for sports fields and courts, including tournament and competition facilities;
- Identification of gaps in the sports facilities inventory; and
- Identification of strategies for improving capacity such as conversion of fields to artificial turf, installation of lighting, enhanced maintenance; and
- Identification of strategies to enable use of existing facilities for new sports and activities.

# 2.4.2 Continue to conduct annual meetings with sports league representatives and other user groups.

Annual meetings with stakeholders will ensure ongoing communication and collaborative planning. These meetings should enable the Sports and Facility Development Strategy development and implementation, as well as to address more detailed issues.

#### Objective 2.5:

Encourage community gardening and local food production by providing multigenerational, collaborative opportunities for learning and growing.

There is on-going demand for more allotment gardens and fruit and nut trees in Victoria. The OCP targets one allotment garden per neighbourhood with more in areas with high density. The challenge is finding appropriate space, as well as the conflicting community desire for more natural areas and unprogrammed open spaces.

#### **ACTIONS**

# 2.5.1 Incorporate community gardening and related amenities into the parks system.

A healthy local food system and opportunities for urban agriculture are important to Victorians. Gardens provide positive social-interaction, environmental education, contribute toward sustainability, and support health and well-being. The parks system can play an important role in improving access to food, increasing local food production, and educating

people about various aspects of the food system. When park improvement plans are prepared, consider the addition of community garden and local food production amenities.

# 2.5.2 Incorporate more public and barrier-free features into or adjacent to community gardens.

Gardens located on park lands increase the visibility and awareness of food production and community gardening opportunities, enliven the park, help build community connections, and encourage new users to visit parks. They can also make participation easier when located near other park amenities. Public and barrier-free features in and adjacent to community gardens will improve their benefits for everyone. Examples include interpretive signs, pollinator-friendly or edible edge plantings, and seating areas with views into the garden.

#### 2.5.3 Work with other significant land owners, both public and private, to identify locations for urban food production and community gardening.

As with other amenities, the right balance of garden space relative to demand for other types of spaces must be considered. In addition, there are other spaces in the city available for urban agriculture. Other potential locations include school grounds, provincial lands, other institutional lands owned by faith-based organizations, Island Health or other private property.

#### Objective 2.6:

# Parks and amenities are easy to find and well-connected by pedestrian and cycling routes.

Victorians love their trails and pathways. There is on-going work towards a city-wide active transportation network. The following actions are aimed at improving trails and pathways within the parks system, as well as recognizing the importance of parks and open spaces as part of the active transportation network.

#### **ACTIONS**

# 2.6.1 Create a wayfinding and signage strategy for the parks and open spaces system.

Consistent and clear signage will help improve awareness of the park system, create a common reference and make it easier for people to find and navigate through parks. This action should build on the Visual Victoria project for city-wide wayfinding, and coordinate with efforts to remove barriers and improve accessibility.

#### 2.6.2 Develop digital tools and strategies that help people find and explore Victoria's parks and open spaces.

There are many new tools available to help engage people, encourage use of the parks system, enliven the parks, and to gather information to inform future decisions. Apps, interactive maps, social media, and many other options are available depending on the goal. As examples, there could be a collection of "best of" walking or jogging routes could be collected from the public, voted on and published digitally or apps could be developed to help people locate the nearest playground, natural area, trail or specific amenity.

# 2.6.3 Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.

This action coordinates with others that recommend better utilization of space, clustering amenities, and improving multifunctionality. Consideration of active transportation end-of-trip amenities should be incorporated into parks, and pathway routes should be

designed to support increased use of walking and cycling. The location of washrooms, drinking fountains, bike racks and benches should be convenient to both adjacent active transportation routes and park users wherever possible, and some park pathways may benefit from widening, paving, or separation of cyclists and pedestrians.

# 2.6.4 Prioritize the development of active transportation linkages and infrastructure that connects residents and visitors to parks.

The City is continuing to develop linkages that support access to parks by bicycle and foot. By focusing on infrastructure improvements connecting parks, benefits of active transportation connections can be maximized by reducing vehicle trips and the associated greenhouse gas emissions.

## 2.6.5 Identify strategies to reduce user conflicts on the Dallas Road waterfront.

The Dallas Road waterfront was highlighted as a specific area of conflict because it is not designed to accommodate the range of users including dog owners with dogs on and off leash, recreational cyclists, bicycle commuters, joggers, and pedestrians.

# 2.6.6 Improve access and public uses along the City's waterfront spaces.

The waterfront and its pathways are highly valued park amenities, and waterfront pathways and access points continue to be in high demand. The City should continue to prioritize initiatives such as the David Foster Harbour Pathway, and identify areas for improving public access to the water and extending existing waterfront pathways through local area plans.

# GOAL 3: CELEBRATE VICTORIA

Special places and amenities in the parks and open spaces system animate the city and support events for residents and visitors.

Outdoor festivals, celebrations, concerts, and performances are increasing in popularity. These activities enliven the parks and open spaces system, entice new park users, offer opportunities for social connection, and are naturally multigenerational. Tourists are increasingly travelling for specific events and are looking for unique local experiences.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPI FS

- We recognize that the City of Victoria is located on the traditional territories of the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, and we seek ways to recognize and celebrate First Nations culture, traditional knowledge, and art within the parks and open spaces system.
- We celebrate Victoria by highlighting the history and heritage of the city within the parks and open spaces system.
- We celebrate Victoria by showcasing horticultural features in the downtown core and other key areas.
- We recognize the economic benefits of tourism and the activation that events can bring to the parks and open spaces system.
- We prioritize actions that benefit both residents and visitors.
- We seek to maintain a balanced approach to providing special events that meet demand while respecting potential impacts on local residents and user groups and their access to neighbourhood parks.

#### Objective 3.1:

# Parks and open spaces highlight Victoria's unique features and character, and support arts, culture and Tourism.

Victoria has many special and unique features including Gonzales Beach, the Inner Harbour, Beacon Hill Park, and the Garry Oak ecosystems, gardens and beautiful horticultural displays. The arts and culture community is thriving. Parks and open spaces can help support local arts and culture by providing opportunities within the parks system for residents to interact with arts and culture features and events.

Tourism is a major economic sector in the City of Victoria. Over 3 million visitors come to Victoria each year to experience the natural and cultural features that make the city special. People are travelling to experience nature, to have shared experiences, to explore historic sites and areas, and to escape from the every day. Outdoor recreation and cultural activities are important tourism areas that overlap with the parks and open spaces system. The parks system should be enhanced to include new venues and amenities to facilitate a wide range of events from sports competitions to cultural festivals.

#### **ACTIONS**

#### 3.1.1 Review and amend the Park Regulation Bylaw to allow for opportunities for limited commercial activities in the parks system.

The existing limitations on commercial activities in the parks prevent the City from improving services that would enable people to enjoy and benefit from longer park visits, entice new users to visit the parks and allow more events to take place by limiting ticketed performances, liquor sales and vending. To ensure that commercial activities provide benefits and have minimal negative impacts, they should be accessible, inclusive, and affordable and should meet a specific need or help enliven the park. Examples of commercial activities that could be considered include recreational equipment rental, coffee carts, food services, temporary markets, etc.

### 3.1.2 Identify opportunities and obstacles to increased activation of Beacon Hill Park.

Beacon Hill Park is a unique park site that is important for both residents and visitors and holds high cultural value for local First Nations. It is currently governed by the parameters outlined in the Trust, which prohibits certain activities. However, there are some activities that could improve the park user experience and improve activation of the park without limiting access or causing damage. This action should be coordinated with the review of the Park Regulation Bylaw regarding appropriate commercial activities in the parks and open spaces system.

3.1.3 Develop 'hands on' experiences, interpretive elements, and educational programming that celebrate Victoria's special features, unique character, and natural environment.

Developing a variety of programs and interactive features throughout the parks system will help meet the demand for new experiences, connections with nature, and more inclusive, family-oriented and multigenerational opportunities.

3.1.4 Enable the animation of Victoria's parks and open spaces by developing a permitting process for temporary arts and culture installations and activities.

In conjunction with the previous action, above, the City can make it easier for artists and organizations to enliven the parks and open spaces system with interesting, temporary features. Examples include site specific art installations; performances; and, light and/or sound installations.

3.1.5 Incorporate outdoor art projects and programs into the parks and open spaces system through the existing artist-in-residence program.

This action could begin by including outdoor projects and programming within the City's existing artist-in-residence program. Depending on the success of initial short-term projects, a

more extensive program could be developed with a dedicated artist-in-residence or a rotating art station specifically for the parks system.

3.1.6 Create Event Hosting Guidelines to help facilitate events hosting by community organizations and the public.

These guidelines will help provide information for the public and community organizations who want to hold events in the parks and open spaces system. The guidelines should include an outline of the process and resources to help ensure successful events.

3.1.7 Incorporate support infrastructure and amenities at key parks to host special events on a regular basis.

Support infrastructure can help improve the delivery of events and improve the experience for participants. Some examples of infrastructure that could be considered include adequate and power water, lighting, washrooms with suitable locations with supplement portable washrooms: access for event vehicles and staging areas; and features to support stages and tents without resulting in long-term damage to surfaces.







# GOAL 4:

# STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

Community members, stewards, and partners help enhance all parks and open spaces in the city.

City-owned lands are only one part of the overall parks and open spaces system in the city. Significant public green spaces are owned or managed by the provincial and federal government, School District #61, and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority. These spaces provide significant benefits to the residents of Victoria, but can also be enhanced to meet the specific needs and priorities identified

through the public engagement process.

There are also а significant number of residents and volunteer organizations that contribute to the improvement of open spaces across the city, from community garden leaders to neighbourhood associations to environmental stewardship groups. The City will need to continue to play a proactive role to build partnerships, support volunteers, coordinate efforts, and maximize the benefits to parks and other open spaces.

# GUIDING PRINCIPI FS

- We strive to improve dialogue and communication with neighbourhood organizations and residents through the neighbourhood and park planning processes.
- We partner and coordinate with other government agencies, municipalities, and other institutions to share knowledge and achieve common goals and objectives.
- We recognize the valuable contribution of volunteers to the parks and open spaces system.

# Objective 4.1:

Collaborate with owners of public green space, other partners and volunteers throughout the City to maximize community benefits.

The following actions highlight some key partnerships including governments and public institutions, as well as volunteers. Partnerships with organizations and increased support for volunteers are important components that will allow the City to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in this Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan.

#### **ACTIONS**

4.1.1 Investigate the potential for Memorandums of Understanding with the provincial and federal governments, School District #61, the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, and other land owners responsible for key public spaces to coordinate planning and identify efficiencies in operations.

Memorandums of Understanding could be developed to cover numerous opportunities for increasing the benefits of non-City-owned open spaces for Victoria residents. Opportunities for joint-use agreements, shared or contracted specialized equipment, joint purchase opportunities, and other design and operations coordination efforts should be sought.

4.1.2 Develop partnerships with First Nations, researchers, government and institutions to advance cultural knowledge, research and innovation in urban ecology.

This action highlights the importance of developing partnerships and leveraging local knowledge in order to achieve objectives including increasing sustainability and ecosystem services and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

4.1.3 Work with stakeholders to identify management practices for park lands to help protect and enhance the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

The Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary encompasses all the marine and shoreline ecosystems in the city. Stakeholders including Environment and Climate Change Canada, CRD, Gorge Waterway Initiative, and others are working to improve stewardship of the upland and marine ecosystems that support birds and other wildlife in the Victoria Harbour. This action also aligns with the objective to increase protection and enhancement of native ecosystems.

4.1.4 Work with Island Health, other municipalities and stakeholders to identify projects that enhance active living, active transportation and the benefits of balanced lifestyles through joint planning, programming and promotion.

Island Health is a potential partner that is seeking to improve public health through a range of outreach efforts. Their objectives align with several of the objectives outlined in this plan, including offering opportunities to improve health and wellness, increase active transportation, and connect people with healthy, local food.

# 4.1.5 Create a Park Volunteer Policy and Program.

Volunteers play an important role in the protection and enhancement of parks and open spaces. Many local groups have extensive knowledge and expertise in areas such as native ecosystems and local food systems. Components of a Park Volunteer Policy and Program could include:

- Consultation with First Nations, volunteer organizations and individuals;
- An inventory of the existing activities of volunteers in the parks system;
- Identification of barriers to increased volunteerism, such as policies, insurance or capacity limitations:
- A summary of the key overlap areas of parks and open spaces needs and volunteer interests;
- A program for volunteer leadership training; and
- Either internal staff training in volunteer coordination and facilitation or the creation of a Volunteer Coordinator position.



# **CHAPTER**



# Implementation & Priorities

This plan provides recommendations for improvements to the parks and open spaces system over the next 25 years. Council's adoption of the master plan represents agreement in principle, but is not a commitment to spend. Specific financial decisions are made by Council as part of the financial planning process. This section includes priorities and timelines for the recommended actions.

# 6.1 Decision-Making Criteria

As new ideas and initiatives arise over the life of this plan, they will need to be evaluated based their contribution toward achieving the Vision, Goals and Objectives. Those initiatives that help achieve multiple benefits, improve equitable access to parks, improve environmental sustainability and increase inclusiveness should be prioritized. Other considerations for reviewing and assigning priorities include alignment with OCP goals, cost effectiveness and partnering opportunities.

# 6.2 Tracking and Reporting

City of Victoria Parks staff will be responsible for ongoing implementation and tracking of the plan, which will be achieved through these actions:

# Review and Prioritize Existing Resources:

Reprioritize parks maintenance resourcing in light of the changing scope and total area of park and open space maintenance the Department is responsible for over the next 10 years.

#### **Annual Reporting:**

To ensure that progress is being made toward achieving the Vision and Goals staff should incorporate information and metrics into the annual financial reporting, highlighting measurable outcomes wherever possible.

#### Official Community Plan Updates:

The Official Community Plan should be brought forward to Council for consideration of updating whenever changes to the inventory of parks and open spaces occur.

#### **Integrated Planning:**

To ensure the priorities of this plan are reflected city-wide, it is recommended that a process be developed for integrating the plan into other planning initiatives such as implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan, Local Area Plans, the Arts and Culture Master Plan, active transportation planning and, the City's Financial Plan.

# Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan Update:

It is recommended that this plan be reviewed and updated every 5 years to ensure that it continues to be relevant and reflective of the needs and priorities of residents.

# 6.3 Funding Strategies

#### 6.3.1 CORE FUNDING

Core funding to create, sustain, and renew park assets are generally provided through the municipal property taxes, as outlined in the Financial Plan. Core funding for parks is sometimes supplemented by user fees such as for picnic shelters, food truck permits, sports fields permits, etc. As the inventory of parks and amenities increases, operational costs will need to keep pace.

# 6.3.2 DEVELOPMENT COST CHARGES

Development Cost Charges (DCCs) are an essential funding source for infrastructure related to population

growth, including parks and trails, however the City of Victoria has recognized that as a built-out city, future funding through Development Cost Charges is limited. Collected DCCs can be used for park land acquisition, and park development projects listed in the DCC bylaw.

# 6.3.3 COMMUNITY AMENITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The City of Victoria seeks Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) as part of property rezonings that result in additional density. Eligible amenities, such as parks, plazas, play lots, and community spaces, are identified through the local area planning process and can be provided directly by the developer or through monetary amenity contributions that are placed into a fund to be used for those amenities.

#### 6.3.4 OTHER FUNDING STRATEGIES

Some external funding is possible through provincial and federal government investment, a variety of granting opportunities although such funding is intermittent and can be challenging to anticipate.

#### **Public Agency Joint Ventures**

Cooperative ventures between the City and other organizations and institutions can leverage limited funding to meet mutual mandates and interests. Partnerships can include joint funding of amenities or programs, potentially reducing capital and operating costs.

#### **Community Organizations**

Groups who have particular interest in some of the recommended capital projects may be effective at fundraising and often have access to grants and funding sources that are not available to municipal governments. There have been a wide range of successful grassroots campaigns for things like

playgrounds, community gardens, and environmental protection initiatives on fundraising platforms such as Go Fund Me.

## **Private Sector Partnerships**

Contracts and partnerships with private business can provide a variety of revenue streams. Related services that could complement the parks system and generate revenue in the form of rental or permit fees could include food trucks, concessions, equipment rentals (bicycles, kayaks, etc.), souvenir shops, and photography services. Other private business could include tour operators, fitness programs, and other training programs and camps. All of these private endeavors would need to complement the parks system and enhance the experience and enjoyment of the parks space and should not overly inhibit use of the parks by residents as well as comply with all relevant City regulations.

# 6.4 Action Plan

The Action Plan below suggests estimated timeframes for recommended actions identified in this Plan, as well as potential costs. All items would be subject to annual work plan and Financial Plan approvals.

The following timeframes are considered estimates:

#### Short-Term (0-3 Years):

These items may be completed as part of the current three-year capital plan. These are actions that were identified as priority projects through the engagement process and also those projects that will help prioritize improvements of existing assets across the parks system.

#### Medium-Term (3-10 Years):

These items would be recommended for funding in the future. They may be recommended for future capital budgets, may be advanced if triggered by redevelopment projects, or if funding (amenity contributions, grants, etc.) becomes available.

# Long-Term (10+ Years):

These items represent longer-term objectives without specific funding strategies or allocations or longer term items contingent on land acquisition or redevelopment.

#### **Operational Items:**

The following actions will be completed over time as part of ongoing City operations or through ongoing park improvement planning and design.

The following are the estimated cost categories:

LOW: < \$100,000 MEDIUM: \$100,000-300,000 HIGH: > \$300,000

An additional table outlining all the recommended actions in numerical order with their associated timelines and costs is included in Appendix C.

PLANNING ACTIONS ESTIMATED COST

Short Term Actions (1-3 Years)			Low	Medium	High
2.1.2	Develop a Park Development and Acquisition Strategy, develop and maintain a list of priority park land acquisitions. Coordinate with the Local Area Plans process.	1	•		
2.1.3	Implement a life-cycle analysis framework to ensure accurate forecasting and planning for significant maintenance, upgrades, repairs, and replacement of park amenities such as washrooms, sports fields and courts, playgrounds, and, trails.	1	•		
2.1.4	Adopt park design guidelines for park furniture and amenities.	1	•		
4.1.5	Create a Park Volunteer Policy and Program.	1	•		
2.1.1	Update and/or consolidate the City's land use policies related to park land designation including consolidating park properties with multiple titles, updating the OCP with the current inventory and developing park zoning designations within the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.	1	•		
2.2.4	Develop a Dogs in Parks Strategy that builds off of the experiences of the existing Paws in Parks Program.	1	•	•	
1.2.3	Identify opportunities to daylight or celebrate culverted streams.	1	•	•	•
2.6.1	Create a wayfinding and signage strategy for the parks and open spaces system.	1		•	•
Medium	Term Actions (3-10 Years)	Priority	Low	Medium	High
1.1.1	Develop a Biodiversity Strategy.	1	•		
2.3.2	Establish a target and implementation plan for the provision of play spaces within an 800 meter walking distance of 99% of households.	1	•		
2.3.5	Develop an All-Wheels Strategy.	1	•		
2.6.2	Develop digital tools and strategies that help people find and explore Victoria's parks and open spaces.	1	•		
3.1.1	Review and amend the Park Regulation Bylaw to allow limited commercial activities in the parks system.	1	•		
3.1.2	Identify opportunities and obstacles to increased activation of Beacon Hill Park.	1	•		
2.2.1	Identify existing underutilized spaces and develop a strategy for how to encourage broader use.	1	•	•	•
2.6.5	Identify strategies to reduce user conflicts on the Dallas Road pathway.	1	•	•	•
2.4.1	Develop a Sports and Facility Development Strategy.	1	•	•	
1.1.3	Develop targets for increasing the use of native plants and the quantity and quality of native ecosystems.	2	•		

PLANNING ACTIONS ESTIMATED COST

Medium Term Actions (3-10 years)		Priority	Low	Medium	High
3.1.4	Enable the animation of Victoria's parks and open spaces by developing a permitting process for temporary arts and culture installations and activities.	2	•		
3.1.5	Incorporate outdoor art projects and programs into the parks and open spaces system through the existing artist-in-residence program.	2	•		
3.1.6	Create an Event Hosting Guidelines to help facilitate events hosting by community organizations and the public.	2	•		
3.1.8	Collaborate with Tourism Victoria on promotional materials that highlight the special features of the parks system.	2	•		
Operation	onal Items	Priority	Low	Medium	High
1.1.2	Continue to implement the Urban Forest Master Plan.	1	•		
1.2.1	Update the Environmental Management Standards for park operations and maintenance that will increase the resilience of parks and open spaces.	1	•		
1.3.4	Identify marine shorelines within the parks system that are vulnerable to climate change impacts and develop mitigation strategies.	1	•		
2.6.3	Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.	1	•		
4.1.1	Investigate the potential for Memorandums of Understanding with the provincial and federal governments, School District #61, the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, and other land owners responsible for key public spaces to coordinate planning and identify efficiencies in operations.	1	•		
2.4.2	Continue to conduct annual meetings with sports league representatives and other user groups.	1	•		
2.5.3	Work with other significant land owners, both public and private, to identify locations for urban food production and community gardening.	1	•		
2.6.4	Prioritize the development of active transportation linkages and infrastructure that connects residents and visitors to parks.	1	•	•	
4.1.4	Work with Island Health, other municipalities and stakeholders to identify projects that enhance active living, active transportation and the benefits of balanced lifestyles through joint planning, programming and promotion.	2	•		
4.1.3	Work with stakeholders to identify ways that City-owned park lands can help protect and enhance the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary.	2	•	•	
4.1.2	Develop partnerships with First Nations, researchers, government and institutions to advance cultural knowledge, research and innovation in urban ecology.	3	•		

CAPITAL ACTIONS ESTIMATED COST

High
•
•
High
•
•

CAPITAL ACTIONS ESTIMATED COST

Long Term Actions (>10 Years)			Low	Medium	High
1.3.4 (B)	Implement mitigation strategies related to climate change impacts on marine shorelines (see Short Term Planning Action 1.3.4).	1			•
1.2.3 (B)	Implement stream daylighting projects (see Short Term Planning Action 1.2.3).	3			•
Operational Items			Low	Medium	High
1.3.3	Identify plants and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change and develop management strategies to help mitigate impacts.	1	•		
2.5.1	Incorporate community gardening and related amenities into the parks system.	1	•		
2.6.6	Improve waterfront access and public uses along the City's waterfront spaces.	1	•	•	•
1.3.2	Use vegetation to shade impervious areas and buildings to reduce the heat island effect and consider green roofs on park buildings and shelters.	2	•		
2.5.2	Incorporate more public and barrier-free features into or adjacent to community gardens.	2	•		
2.2.2	Incorporate a variety of spaces for socializing and group gatherings into park spaces.	2	•	•	•
2.2.3	Develop areas in the parks and open spaces system that encourage mental restoration and relaxation.	2	•	•	•
1.3.5	Reduce impervious surfaces, particularly along the waterfront.	2			•

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# Appendices

# Appendix A

Parks and Open Spaces Inventory

# 2016 Park Asset Inventory Summary

2010 Falk Asset lilvell	tory Summary			
Asset/Amenity	City Data	Total number / units	Count (# of parks with this feature)	Estimated # of features or # of parks
Ball Diamonds	31	31	12	31
			_	9
Basketball Courts	2.1	14	9	
Chess Tables	2 chess tables	2	1	2
Cricket Field	1 5	1	1	1
Outdoor Fitness Locations	5	10	5	5
Football Field	1	2	1	1
Gazebo	8	8	4	8
Ball Hockey Courts	1 ball hockey court and 2 half courts	4	3	3
Annual Beds	19 parks with this feature	2305	19	19
Green Roofs	1 green roof	617	1	1
Ponds	2 pond water features	14283	2	2
1 01140	_ pond nate. reatares	11200	_	
Rain Gardens	3 parks have rain gardens, 7 gardens total	631	3	3
Rose Gardens	5 rose gardens	774	5	5
Lacrosse Box	1	1	1	1
Community Gardens	2 Edible Demonstration Gardens	3273	8	8
Community Orchard	1 community orchard at Banfield Park	435	1	1
Urban Farms	1 farm: Beacon Hill Children's Farm	4930	1	1
Lawn Bowling Greens	3 lawn bowling greens (Vic West Park, Cridge Park, Beacon Hill Park)	7174	3	3
Natural Areas		510744 sq.m.	7	
Picnic Tables	103 (43 in parks)	10	9	43
Playgrounds	40 playgrounds spread across 39 parks	98	39	39
Rugby Field	3 pitches - 2 at macdonald and one at Royal Athletic	10	2	2
Scoreboards	3 scoreboards	3	3	3
Shade Structures (All)	37	21	7	37
Shade Structures	16 (wood only)	16	12	19
Soccer Fields	12	25	7	12
Basketball Courts	4 full (two at Central Park, 1 Vic West, 1 Wiliam Stevenson) and 5 half (Banfield, Oswald, Cecelia, Oaklands and BHP)	4	4	4
Bike Park	1	1	1	1
Multi-Sport Courts	2	2	2	2
Skateboard Park	1	1	1	1
Tennis Courts	25 courts in 10 different parks	11	10	11
Artificial Turf Field	1	1	1	1
Volleyball Courts	2	4	2	2
Water and Spray Parks	1	2	1	1

# Appendix B Public Engagement

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

To provide guidance on how investments are made in parks and open spaces, the community was engaged in the development of a parks and open spaces master plan throughout the course of the project.

There were two phases of engagement. The first phase sought to solicit feedback from the community to inform a vision for parks and open spaces and guidelines to inform short and long term investment in parks and open spaces. Phase two sought input from the community on the draft vision, goals, objectives, and key actions, ensuring that the community's feedback has been accurately reflected. All of the feedback collected has been incorporated and will help guide improvements over the next 25 years.

#### ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The engagement approach included a wide range of tools, some targeted at specific stakeholder groups and others seeking to gather input from the general public and "non-users" - those who may not regularly use parks and open spaces.

Overall the number of people estimated to have actively participated to date is approximately 1,600. Additionally, a significant number of people were reached through the pop-up events and other forms of communication and publicity.

The following tools were used to engage stakeholders and the general public:

Phone Survey	A statistically valid phone survey was completed by Mustel Group Market Research in June 2016. A total of <b>403 interviews</b> were conducted by telephone over a random selection of residents 15 years of age or over.
	The margin of error on the sample is <b>+/-4.9% at the 95% confidence interval</b> . The phone survey provides the City with a reliable source of data that is representative of the city population as a whole, including "non-users" whose input cannot be captured through other means.
	Respondents were representative of the population as a whole, as well as geographically representative of the City's neighbourhoods (data is included in the Engagement Details section).
	The interviewees included 39% renters and 58% home owners. In comparison, the online survey only included 26% renters.
	There was a significantly greater proportion of respondents who had physical limitations compared with responses to the online survey (11% vs 6%).
Online Survey #1	An online survey, aligned with the phone survey questions, was hosted on the City's website for anyone to complete. Between June 13 <sup>t</sup> and August 2, <b>670 residents</b> participated in the survey. Mustel Group Market Research

	analyzed the online data alongside, but separate from, the phone survey results.
	Respondents were not representative of the population as a whole, as there were fewer responses from those ages 15-39 and more responses from those ages 40-79 compared with the phone survey.
	There were responses from all neighbourhoods, but fewer from Hillside-Quadra, Fernwood, Downtown, Oaklands, Burnside, and North Park compared with the phone survey.
	15% of the responses were from people living outside of Victoria.
	Compared with the phone survey, there were fewer people living alone who answered the online survey, but more retirees and more people who own their home.
Focus Groups	1.5 hour long focus group sessions were held with the following:
	<ul> <li>Neighbourhood Associations (3 sessions, 21 participants) -         Attendees included James Bay, Downtown, Fairfield, Fernwood,             Rockland, Hillside/Quadra, Vic West, North Jubilee, Burnside             Gorge, Oaklands, and North Park. Those not attending included             Harris Green, South Jubilee, and Gonzales.     </li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Seniors – 9 participants</li> <li>Youth (30 min session) – 9 participants, consultants met with youth participating in a youth leadership workshop.</li> </ul>
	■ Field Sports Groups – 8 participants
	<ul> <li>Naturalists and Stewardship Groups – 4 participants</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Accessibility Working Group – 9 participants, including 2 City staff and 1 councillor</li> </ul>
Pop-Up Events	Information booths were set up at 8 different public events and locations across the city during the month of June including a Harbour Cats Game, #YYJ, the Moss Street Market, Crystal Pool, and other locations.
Open House #1	An open house was held on Wednesday, July 27, 2016 from 4 p.m. to-7 p.m. at the Fernwood Community Centre. Display boards included information on the project as well as a series of participatory activities and opportunities for feedback. Attendees were also able to talk directly with members of the consulting team and City staff. Attendance was approximatly30 people which is likely due to the nice weather, mid-summer date, and the absence of any controversial proposals.
Stakeholder Interviews and Meetings	An interagency meeting was held with representatives from Island Health Authority, Greater Victoria School District, and City staff from Food Systems, Recreation, and Parks Planning & Design.

	Telephone or in-person interviews were also conducted with the following stakeholders in July and August:
	<ul> <li>Oak Bay</li> <li>Equimalt</li> <li>Tourism Victoria</li> <li>Greater Victoria Harbour Authority</li> <li>Victoria's Green Team (to be completed)</li> </ul>
Online Survey #2	An online survey was hosted on the City's website for anyone to complete for the month of November 2016. 465 residents participated in the survey, with <b>372 residents</b> completing all of the main questions.
	Respondents represented a range of ages, although there were slightly more responses from those 40-59 and slightly fewer from those under 24 and over 80 years of age compared to the random sample from the first phone survey.
	There were responses from all neighbourhoods, with slightly lower response rates from those in Downtown than expected.
	19% of the responses were from people living outside of Victoria.
Open House #2	An open house was held on Saturday, November 19 <sup>th</sup> from 10am – 1pm at the McPhereson Theatre with approximately <b>60 people</b> attending.
	Display boards included the Draft Vision, Goals, Objectives and Key Actions, as well as a series of participatory activities and opportunities for feedback. Attendees were also able to talk directly with members of the consulting team and City staff.

# **PUBLICITY AND MEDIA**

The following communication tools were also used to create awareness of the project and the opportunities to participate:

- Information boards posted at 14 major City parks
- Social media campaign interesting facts and photos posted to social media outlets
- Playground passport encourages young families to visit different parks for a prize
- Publicity and media City website updates, press releases, event advertising, etc.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS – ROUND #1

Similar feedback was received across all engagement channels. Outlined below are high-level themes and which emerged through the public engagement process:

- Victoria residents value the environmental features, natural areas, and ecosystems within
  the City's parks and open spaces system and would like to see more of them. Preserving
  and improving the environmental features and benefits arose as the highest priority through
  multiple engagement methods.
- Residents value flexible outdoor spaces that can accommodate a range of uses. There is a leaning toward more unprogrammed spaces in the parks and open spaces system. Related to this, there is a desire for more diversity in parks, social spaces and quiet, meditative spaces.
- There is support for improving parks and open spaces by adding more inclusive spaces and designs that are accessible and accommodate a range of ages, abilities and needs.
- Spaces to play are important, particularly for children and youth, but also places for families to play together. There are opportunities to incorporate a wider variety of amenities for all ages. For example, the youth focus group revealed that youth mostly use public plazas and seating areas as opposed to parks and green spaces.
- Residents want improvements at existing parks and open spaces to be a priority including adequate maintenance, washrooms, safety, drinking fountains, and other support amenities. This was highlighted in multiple engagement methods.

# PHONE AND ONLINE SURVEY #1

## **Outdoor Recreational Activities, Habits and Barriers**

- Types of Activities:
  - Walking, followed by cycling and hiking are the most popular outdoor recreational activities among City of Victoria residents 15 and over, including both summer and winter months.
  - Among children 5 to 11 years of age, bicycling is the most favoured activity—mostly on-road but many also enjoy off-road cycling. Playgrounds, soccer and swimming are also quite popular. Among children 12 to 17 years old, bicycling is also the most popular outdoor activity. Other favourites among the older children/teens include hiking and swimming.
  - Other items not on the list suggested by online respondents included disc golf, badminton, table tennis, tai chi, outdoor fitness classes, playgrounds, photography, and bocce.
- **Frequency:** Residents visit parks and open spaces in the City very regularly. A majority report going weekly or more often (72%) and 6-in-10 say they visit multiple times weekly. Of the online survey respondents, 92% visit parks at least once per week.

Barriers: Lack of time is the most mentioned obstacle to visiting City parks more often. The next most mentioned barriers are lack of parking, difficult access/too far away and feeling unsafe (particularly by women). Other obstacles of note include: being too crowded, poor maintenance/ conditions, lack of interest and excessive noise.

#### **Satisfaction and Improvements Desired**

- Most Appreciated: Pathways are the most appreciated park amenity. Other amenities of note include natural areas, park washrooms, unprogrammed green space and waterfront/beach areas.
- Satisfaction: Overall satisfaction with Victoria's parks and open spaces is very high with 90% of residents at least 'somewhat' satisfied and 60% 'very' satisfied. Satisfaction levels were lower in the online survey respondents, but was still high with 85% 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied.
- In terms of specific park amenities and facilities, residents are satisfied with most aspects. Topping the list are waterfront and beach access, flower displays, pathways and natural areas. Other aspects well-regarded by a majority of randomly sampled residents include unprogrammed green space, outdoor sport fields, playgrounds and court facilities.
- Satisfaction is weakest for park washrooms, off-leash dog areas, and outdoor fitness equipment.
- Additions/Improvements: When asked what amenities are missing or need improvement, most residents had no suggestions. Among desired changes having 'more' of the following was most mentioned: more parks/green space or natural areas, washroom facilities, off-leash dog areas and shared-use pathways (cycling, walking, etc.).

## Important Objectives for Future Parks Systems

- Respondents rated the importance of 12 objectives for guiding the future of Victoria's parks system. These objectives were developed based on the background review, inventory and discussions between staff and the consulting team. The 12 objectives included:
  - Protect and highlight natural areas and environmental stewardship
  - Provide informal spaces for picnics and socializing
  - Ensure access to the water and promote marine recreation
  - Encourage community gardening and local food production
  - Address climate change
  - Beautify the community
  - Highlight the cultural heritage of the community
  - Create unique, attractive places
  - Improve safety
  - Expand the range of amenities and potential uses in parks
  - More organized events and festivals in parks
  - Provide dog off-leash areas and trails

All 12 objectives are considered important by at least a majority of residents (70% or more), but clearly the most important is: "Protecting and highlighting natural areas and environmental stewardship".

Three-quarters of residents believe this objective is 'very important' and nearly everyone agrees that this is an important guideline.

- Several other objectives are 'very important' to at least half/almost half of residents, but standing out are:
  - o "addressing climate change" (64% very important), and
  - "encouraging community gardening and local food production" (61% very important).

## Communications

- While the current methods used by the City to communicate with the public about parks and open spaces amenities and issues are considered effective by the majority of residents, a sizeable proportion think there is room for improvement (39%).
- The most preferred methods of communication to help increase awareness of parks and open spaces are online interactive maps showing parks, amenities and walking routes. About half of residents would prefer this type of online resource.
- Better signage is preferred by about one-quarter.

# **FOCUS GROUPS**

Key themes heard in the focus groups include:

#### Safety

Improve park user safety/comfort in all parks especially in Irving Park and Beacon Hill, clean up needles left in parks and provide needle boxes, improve lighting, improve level of maintenance.

#### Washrooms

Increase number of washrooms, make gender neutral and family friendly, keep open later, provide better signage, improve level of maintenance, consider providing water and electric hookups.

## **Universal Accessibility**

Ensure parks are accessible by bike routes and public transit, provide bike parking, improve marked crossings at park entrances, provide QR codes and tactile wayfinding indicators, incorporate tactile path markings, provide more shallow ramps and paved paths, offer hard surface beach access to hard-packed sand, provide scent-free and quiet areas.

## **Improved Maintenance and Park Quality**

Create park classification system that defines park use and level of maintenance, provide and map out green corridors/linkages (for habitat and people), address poor sports field drainage, improve general maintenance (emptying garbage receptacles more often, mowing, etc), restore and maintain natural park ecosystems, upgrade wayfinding, provide more benches/seating and trash receptacles.

#### **Shared Space**

Allow for different age groups/abilities to play side by side, be technology-friendly (charging stations, wifi, QR codes), be culturally sensitive (use beyond nuclear family, more group-friendly), allow food carts, include community gathering places, update children's play spaces (natural and constructed, water play), provide adult play spaces that aren't sports fields or paved sports courts (swings, parkour, etc), provide opportunities for community gardening and urban agriculture on currently unused land (public greenhouse, food security, compost education, orchards/food gardens).

#### Investment needs

Communities with the least amount of park space should be the priority (maintain minimum standard).

# **POP-UP EVENTS**

The feedback from the pop-up events included the following comments and suggestions:

- More edible community gardens;
- Additional outdoor fitness equipment in parks;
- More trees and stewardship of plants, wildlife and sensitive ecosystems;
- Unsanctioned camping in parks needs to be addressed;
- Amenities for the following sports were mentioned:
  - o lacrosse;
  - o frisbee golf;
  - o outdoor basketball courts;
  - o tennis courts; and
  - o lawn bowling;
- More seating, benches and sculpture/public art in parks;
- The following community amenities were mentioned:
  - tea room near beacon hill park;
  - community stage for local performers;
  - community gathering spaces;
  - increased green space downtown; and
  - o more fenced in off-leash dog areas.





# **OPEN HOUSE #1**

The open house had approximately 30 attendees, but despite the small numbers it included people from around the city and a variety of ages.

1. Attendees were asked to mark where they live (yellow dots) and what parks they use the most (blue) on a map. There was limited attendance from those residing toward the edges of the city.



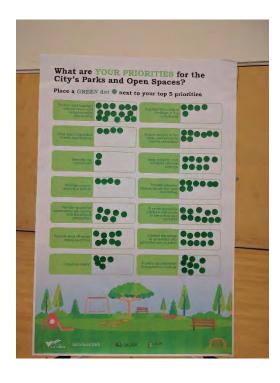
2. What existing park features do you or your family use the most?

Waterfront / beach access	15
Pathways / walking trails	15
Natural areas	14
Unprogrammed green space	12
Children's play areas	10
Off-leash dog areas	7
Picnic areas	7
Interpretive features	7
Park washrooms	6
Court facilities	5
Outdoor sport fields	5
Horticulture displays	3
Outdoor fitness equipment	1

- 3. What new park features would you like to see in parks?
  - Skateboard parks and micro skate features
  - Water fountains
  - Cleaner beaches
  - Continue guided walks and more educational programs in parks
  - Art and kinetic installations, poetry, prose, painting in parks
  - Water / spray parks
  - Kids play spaces, including adventure/wild play, places to explore and experiment
  - Bocce
  - Community greenhouses at community gardens
  - Dog fencing / dog off-leash areas
  - Meditation area
  - Floating gardens
  - Bird-watching areas
  - Pocket parks
  - More food forests and community greenhouses
- 4. What are your priorities for the City's parks and open spaces?

The objectives tested in the phone survey were also tested at the Public Open House. Two additional objectives were added to those originally included in the phone survey (denoted with a \* in the table below), which were identified by the community through the focus groups.

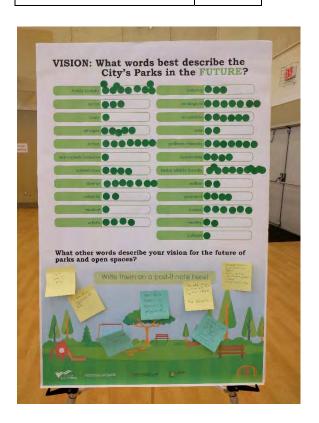
Protect and highlight natural areas and environmental stewardship	16
Provide space for children and youth to be active and socialize*	11
Expand the range of amenities and potential uses in parks	10
Address climate change	9
Provide opportunities to experience nature*	9
Provide informal spaces for picnics and socializing	8
Ensure access to the water and promote marine recreation	8
Provide dog off-leash areas and trails	8
Encourage community gardening and local food production	7
Highlight the cultural heritage of the community	5
Improve safety	5
Create unique, attractive places	4
More organized events and festivals in parks	4
Beautify the community	2





# 5. VISION: What words best describe the City's parks in the future?

Bird and wildlife friendly	11	Peaceful	4
Family friendly	10	Social	3
Active	7	Relaxing	3
Diverse	7	Colourful	2
Ecological	7	Safe	2
Pollinator-friendly	7	Edible	2
Accessible	6	Healthy	2
Casual	6	Lively	1
All-ages	5	Team/sports inclusive	1
Adventurous	4	Musical	1
Artistic	4	Cultural	1
Sustainable	4		



6. How would you balance the different desired park uses in the future?

Participants were asked to distribute 5 beans into jars marked with 6 overarching park uses. The responses reflected the other input gathered at the open house and through the phone survey.

Natural areas and environmental protection	32
Play spaces	30
Quiet areas for relaxing	18
Picnic / Social spaces	17
Dog off-leash areas	15
Sports fields and courts	14

7. There was also a children's colouring station, asking what they like to do outdoors. Responses included climbing trees, playgrounds, beaches, soccer and lots of great scribbles.



### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – ROUND #2

There were two primary methods for public engagement to review the Draft Vision, Goals, Objectives and Key Actions in the fall of 2016: an Online Survey #2 and Public Open House #2.

An online survey was available on the City's website for the month of November and had **372 complete responses**.

Open House #2 was held on November 19<sup>th</sup> from 10am – 1pm at McPhereson Theatre to provide an opportunity for the public to review the Draft materials, provide feedback, and discuss the plan with City staff and the consulting team in person.

### ONLINE SURVEY #2 RESULTS

The following provides a summary of the data, as well as the detailed open-ended responses.

#### 1. Draft Vision

Support 68% Somewhat Support 28% Do not 2.8% Don't know 1.3%

#### Why:

- It's hard to capture all the roles that parks play for residents and for ecosystems but this captures it well.
- It needs to include "safe" too. I don't feel safe in some of the city parks and squares.
- I like that the parks become part of the character of the city. I also like that they are considered ecosystems that are sustainable.
- You have included "inclusive" which is very important to me as a person with a disability.
- Terrific span of choices for any kind of need.
- No mention of traditional territory, not sure if "culture" is enough. Food for thought.
- For such a dog-friendly city, Victoria is woefully lacking secure, fenced off-leash areas.
- Would be good to articulate the ecological role they play, including the climate adaptation and mitigation role.
- Looks like it covers just about everything.
- It is a very broad statement and covers a lot of what is important in a park.
- Dynamic, yes! Playful! Dedicated sanctuaries where people can commune.
- Parks are a vital resource for current and future generations.

#### 2. Draft Goals

The goals are listed in order from highest % of "strongly support" to lowest. All were supported by a majority of survey respondents.

Protect and improve ecosystems and help the City mitigate and adapt to climate change

Strongly Support76%Somewhat Support13%Neutral8.2%Not very Supportive1.75%Do not Support1.5%

Support and encourage people to be active and participate in activities that improve their health

Strongly Support75%Somewhat Support18%Neutral5.5%Not very Supportive1.0%Do not Support1.0%

Create parks and open spaces that are inviting and friendly to everyone and easy to access, navigate, and enjoy

Strongly Support 75%
Somewhat Support 15%
Neutral 6.8%
Not very Supportive 1.76%
Do not Support 1.76%

Create parks and open spaces that have a variety of opportunities for people to socialize, build community, and relax

Strongly Support68%Somewhat Support23%Neutral6.3%Not very Supportive1.3%Do not Support1.8%

Enhance parks and open spaces to provide a wider range of possible uses

Strongly Support55%Somewhat Support28%Neutral8.7%Not very Supportive5.6%Do not Support2.3%

Create special places and amenities in parks and open spaces that animate the city and support events for both locals and visitors

Strongly Support52%Somewhat Support27.5%Neutral13.6%Not very Supportive4.3%Do not Support2.3%

#### Develop partnerships to enhance all green spaces in the city

51% **Strongly Support Somewhat Support** 25% Neutral 14% Not very Supportive 6% Do not Support 3%

#### 3. Draft Key Action: Environment and Natural Areas

**Strongly Support** 68.5% **Somewhat Support** 20.5% Neutral 7% Not very Supportive 2.5% Do not Support 1.3%

#### 4. Draft Key Action: Park Land Acquisition

### When considering new parkland, what should the City's focus be? (choose up to

<del>•</del> /·
Land with sensit
Waterfront sites
l a a a ti a m a tha a t ma

Land with sensitive ecosystems	61%
Waterfront sites for parks and pathways	60%
Locations that more equally distribute parks in all neighbourhoods	52%
Locations in areas where more residential development is expected (Downtown and the Urban Villages)	48%
Sites that enable socializing and picnicking	36%

#### Comments:

- Land for sport and recreation is also important
- Park land is so needed in the downtown area, and playgrounds.
- Land with sensitive ecosystems if it ensures its preservation and prevents development on that land.

#### 5. Draft Key Action: Opportunities for socializing and quiet contemplation

Which of the following would you most like to see more of in the City's parks? ( choose up to 3):

Quiet seating areas at viewpoints	56%
Areas with lighting to allow outdoor gatherings year-round	41%
Covered group picnic shelters	33%

Informal seating areas for groups of 6-10 people	32%
Paved plazas for community festivals, markets and events	21%
Spectator seating at sports fields and courts	17%
Seating around a public art feature	16%

### 6. Draft Key Action: Dogs in Parks

To give us a better sense of what the Dogs in Parks Strategy should focus on, please tell us which of following issues related to dogs in parks are the most important (choose up to 3):

Rules and etiquette for park use	49%
Defining off-leash boundaries and fencing	46%
Waste management	42%
Additional off-leash areas	39%
Locations and design features for off-leash areas	39%
Environmental protection	31%
Safety and enforcement	30.5%

# 7. Draft Key Action: Commercial Uses in the Parks Please tell us how much you support this action:

Strongly Support	30%
Somewhat Support	34%
Neutral	14%
Not very Supportive	11%
Do not Support	11%

#### 8. Draft Key Action: Park Volunteers

Strongly Support	52%
Somewhat Support	25%
Neutral	16%
Not very Supportive	5%
Do not Support	2.4%

### 9. Draft Key Action: Waterfront

How much do you support this action as a priority for waterfront improvements?

Strongly Support	58%
Somewhat Support	23%

Neutral 10.5% Not very Supportive 6% **Do not Support** 3%

#### Are there specific locations we should consider?

- Harbour Pathway
- Along the Gorge, connecting with Saanich walkway.
- Cordova Bay walkway or boardwalk along oceanfront.
- Arbutus park or the bottom of harriet for a kayak launch.
- Dallas Road and particularly Clover point. This should be a park not a parking lot.
- Along Dallas Road, David Foster Walkway.
- Completing and expanding upon the current harbour walkway plan would be wonderful. The view of our city from the water is unique and special. Stopping the degradation of the Dallas Rd. cliffs in a more natural looking way would be nice.
- Dallas Road between Ogden Point/Breakwater beach and Clover Point;
- Inner Harbour, Upper Harbour, Selkirk Water
- The City should focus on the Inner Harbour to Dallas Rd Path. It should be see
  more than a path, but a journey. The plan for that journey should include the
  obvious seating areas, viewpoints, but also gathering areas 'entertainment and
  busker pavilions' and cafes every 200-400 metres. This will create a world class
  experience of Victoria.
- Along the Gorge. There is so much development happening along the north side of the Gorge from downtown, and the waterfront along this shore is mostly inaccessible. Could be amazing.
- It would be great if there were docks/small storage shelters installed so that
  people can launch kayaks, SUPs, canoes, and other small boats safely and
  easily, and lock them up somewhere out of the rain. This would make waterbased recreational activities more accessible and affordable than they are
  currently. Obviously people with valuable boats would not leave them in park
  shelters, but I think that some people would store less valuable boats.
- Along the Gorge waterway in Burnside Gorge.
- Don't provide access to the most ecologically sensitive areas!

# Do you have any other comments on the draft vision, goals and actions for Victoria's parks and open spaces?

- All parks and open spaces plans must have realistic operating funds and staffing for maintenance, repairs, clean-up and environmental remediation (e.g. removing fallen trees and branches after windstorm) as well as recycling kiosks where visitors can dispose of waste or recyclables.
- The community school with which I'm involved makes constant use of the parks, and with the rise in outdoor kindergartens and interest in the environment there could be more interpretation and learning spaces in the parks. Partnership with the museum?
- Would like to see some recognition that children, their safety and access to high quality play equipment and facilities are a high priority.
- I hope you will not allow allotment gardens on existing Park land...it is not
  inclusive or community building to fence off public space for the benefit of
  individuals, and there is less desirable and unused space that can be used for

- allotment gardens. True, open, community gardens are different and welcome in public parks.
- Victoria is in dire need of more large parks (featuring restored native ecosystems)
  within walking distance of the city centre. It's unacceptable that the closest
  examples such as Mount Douglas Park or Thetis Lake are so far from the city.
  Look to Vancouver's Stanley Park as something to aspire toward.
- Children's playgrounds downtown are needed.
- Remember that parks are on indigenous land and food and plants should be indigenous and harvesting of these plants by local nations should be encouraged.
- Creating more opportunities for diverse use of parks (i.e. music, markets, BBQ spaces) will help get people using parks more and in different ways.
- Protect what little natural areas that we have left, acquire more land to add to the park system, and restore and enhance natural areas that have become degraded and ignored. And provide the human and financial resources for this work!
- I appreciate the City's focus on our green spaces and the preservation of trees and ecologically sensitive areas.
- Actions: more "natural" playgrounds in addition to equipment being purchased. I
  see a lot of funds spent around the city on specialized and expensive exercise
  equipment and play structures. I think in some cases well maintained natural
  landscapes (logs, rocks) could appeal to groups more widely than special agespecific structures.
- Ensure that waterfront accessibility does not compromise biodiversity and sensitive shoreline habitats.

### PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE #2

A public open house was held on November 19<sup>th</sup> to provide an opportunity for the public to review the draft goals, objectives, and key actions for the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan and to talk to City staff and the consulting team.

Attendees were given dots to respond to specific questions as well as sticky notes to provide comments related to any of the draft content.

The results of the dot voting on specific questions are summarized below.

#### 1. Does the VISION capture the overall community priorities?

Yes	Somewhat	No
33	4	1

#### 2. Which of these GOALS should be the top priorities?

Create Parks for People	26
Protect the Environment	22
Be Active	19

Be Inclusive and Accessible	14
Be Multifunctional	13
Celebrate Victoria	11
Build Partnerships	5

**3. Increased Natural Areas:** To increase the amount of natural areas in parks, some tradeoffs must be considered. <u>Do you support the following strategies?</u>

	Support	Neutral	Don't Support
Expand existing natural areas	23	4	0
Replace ornamental flower beds with native plants	20	9	0
Replace lawns with native plants	18	9	2

4. Allotment Gardens: Do you support having allotment gardens in City Parks?

Support	Neutral	Don't Support
32	5	7

5. Do you support the addition of the following features to the parks system?

	Support	Neutral	Don't Support
Water/spray park	24	4	1
Skate park	8	7	2
Bike features	21	3	1
Disc golf	8	3	2
Outdoor fitness	17	1	1

The written comments received included the following:

#### **GENERAL / HAVE YOUR SAY**

- Support replacement for Vic West Elem play structure
- Expand use of McDonald Park
- Safe corridors for biking between green space and neighbourhoods
- Allow fruit trees on boulevards and create adopt a tree program for those trees similar to the Fruit Tree Stewardship Program

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

 I would love to see specific commitment to protecting and enhancing native bird/insect/plan/etc species

#### **PLAYGROUNDS**

- Playgrounds, especially in the downtown core
- More play areas downtown. The pop up park really highlights the need for parks downtown.
   There is nowhere to go from here with my kids.

#### **DOGS IN PARKS**

- Dog park needed Downtown, North Park and Fairfield
- "balance" must be people (all ages) first
- In high density residential areas need passive parks not accepted by special interest groups
- Enclosed dog play parks; walking, roller skating/blading, stroller paths along Dallas with dogs on leash
- Put in split rail fence by pathway on Dallas road, as proposed
- Encourage training and socializing for dogs; add pocket enclosed dog play parks
- Enforce on-leash areas

#### **NEW AMENITIES**

- More black benches, fewer white benches
- Community gardens only (i.e. no privatization of public land to private allotments
- Water features are too expensive to maintain and Victoria has enough "water"
- Use CALUC groups with experience on steering committee to take to broader group
- Include community in the creation of a new park beyond just the CALUC process
- Upgrade park in Fairfield that has old play equipment
- Need seating, bike parking and child play equipment at Clover Point and Holland Piont Parks
- Water fountain in every park and washroom in all major parks
- Edible landscaping maintained by parks staff not just citizen volunteers
- Community gardens are open to all, not just allotment gardeners therefore should be given equal City resources as dog parks or community centres proportionally
- Minimize public washrooms only downtown needed public washrooms encourage camping
- More "innovative" seating; benches are passé

#### **CELEBRATE VICTORIA**

- Creative, playful spaces please
- Art installations should be active, serve multi-uses
- Allow commercial food services in parks
- Consult with neighbourhs prior to approving events
- Bring back the lantern festival in Beacon Hill; find a way around outdated "trust" provisions and restrictions

Need inner harbour beach-like or water access area

#### **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS**

Encourage co-operation with First Nations to plant species (i.e. camas) in Beacon Hill Park

### **ENGAGEMENT DATA**

### PHONE AND ONLINE SURVEY #1

- The random sample was weighted to match census statistics on the basis of age within gender. The on-line survey sample is unweighted.
- Note that the on-line survey includes 15% of respondents who reside outside of the City of Victoria.
- Differences of note between the two samples are indicated by the following notations:
  - o Differences between the samples is noted with the following notations:
    - ▲ Significantly higher ▼ Significantly lower

	Random Sample (403) %	Online Sample (670) %
Gender		
Male	47	44
Female	53	51
Other/ refused	-	5
Age		
15 to 24	11	4
25 to 39	30	25
40 to 59	27	33
60 to 79	25	35
80+	5	1
Refused	3	3
Neighbourhood of residence		
Fairfield	16	20
James Bay	13	9
Victoria West	9	12
Hillside-Quadra	12	8▼
Fernwood	9	6▼
Downtown	11	4▼
Rockland	5	8
Oaklands	7	4▼
Burnside Gorge	7	3▼
North and South Jubilee	5	3

Gonzales	2	3
North Park	4	1▼
Harris Green	1	1
Outside of Victoria	-	15▲
Refused	-	2

	Random Sample (403) %	Online Sample (670) %
Personal family situation		
Person living alone	28▲	19
Person living with parents	10▲	2
Person living with friends	4	3
Spouse or partner, no children at home	35	45▲
Spouse or partner with children at home	17	25▲
Single parent with children at home	3	3
Prefer not to say	2	2
Employment		
Employed	64	62
Full-time	45	48
Part-time	10	15
Self-employed	11	-
Not employed	39	42
Retired	24	32▲
Unemployed and not looking for work	7	2
Homemaker and not employed outside of the home	2	3
Student	7	6
Full-time	7	4
Part-time	1	2
Prefer not to say	1	3
Home ownership		
Own	58	72▲
Rent	39	26
Prefer not to say	2	3

	Random Sample (403) %	Online Sample (670) %
Years lived in Victoria		
5 or less	10	18
6 - 9	16	14

11. How old are you?				
Number of respondents : 368				
Choice		Total	%	
under 18 years old			3	0.82
18 - 24			14	3.80
25 - 39			114	30.98
40 - 59			144	39.13
60 - 79			92	25.00
80 or over			1	0.27
Note: There were slightly more respon and slightly fewer from those under 24 age compared to the actual demograph	and over 80 years of			
10 – 19	28		25	
20 – 29	22		15	
30 – 39	10		11	
40+	13		13	
Prefer not to say	1		5	
Average	21		20	
Physical limitations				
Yes	11 ▲		6	
No	89		91	
Prefer not to say	-		3	

### **ONLINE SURVEY #2**

### 12. Do you identify as:

Number of respondents: 369 Choice Total % Male 140 37.94 Female 218 59.08 0.00 Transgender 0 Other / Prefer not to say 11 2.98

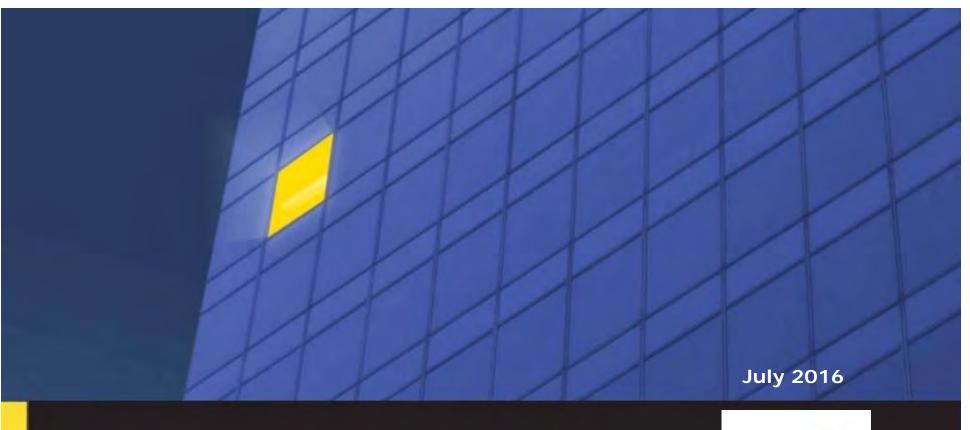
Note: There was a slightly higher proportion of women than men who completed the survey.

### 13. Which neighbourhood do you live in?

Number of respondents: 361

Choice	Total	%
Burnside Gorge	19	5
Downtown	23	6
Fairfield	54	15
Fernwood	22	. 6
Gonzales	10	3
Harris Green	4	1
Hillside Quadra	38	11
James Bay	41	11
North and South Jubilee	20	6
North Park	6	2
Oaklands	17	5
Rockland	g	3
Victoria West	29	8
Outside of Victoria	69	19

Note: Responses were spread proportionally across the City's neighbourhoods, although there were slightly fewer responses from those living Downtown than expected and 19% of responses were from people living outside of Victoria.



City of Victoria Parks and Recreation Master Plan — Community Survey











### Foreword

#### Introduction

The following report summarizes the findings from a City of Victoria survey regarding current usage habits and opinions of municipal parks and open spaces. The survey was administered by telephone among a random selection of residents, and was available on-line to residents interested in expressing their opinions.

### **Telephone Survey Methodology**

- A total 403 interviews were conducted by telephone with a random selection of residents, 15 years of age or over.
- The margin of error on the sample is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level.
- Specific steps were taken to insure the sample is representative of the community at large including:
  - sample drawn at random from an up-to-date database of published residential listings and cell phone listings;
  - next birthday method employed to randomize respondent selection within the household;
  - up to 6 calls made to each household/individual to reduce potential bias due to non-response;
  - final sample weighted by gender within age to match Statistics Canada Census data.

### Telephone Survey Methodology, cont.

- Interviewing was conducted by Mustel Group interviewers weekday evenings and during the day on weekends from June 23<sup>rd</sup> to July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
- The questionnaire used is appended.
- Detailed computer tabulations are provided under separate cover.

### **Open-Access On-line Survey Methodology**

- 670 residents participated in the open access survey.
- The online survey was open from June 13<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016.
- The analysis of findings in this report focuses on the random survey results but the findings from the online survey are displayed in the charts. The online results should however be interpreted with caution as the findings may not be reflective of the broader community. For example, the on-line survey sample is skewed to older residents, and includes more homeowners and slightly more with children at home, but fewer singles and fewer in some neighbourhoods, such as Downtown.
- Also note that the on-line survey includes 15% who reside outside of the City of Victoria.





### Executive Overview

#### **Outdoor Recreational Activities Habits and Barriers**

- Types of Activities: Walking and then cycling, followed by hiking are the most popular outdoor recreational activities among City of Victoria residents 15 and over, including both summer and winter months.
- Among children 5 to 11 years of age, bicycling is the most favoured activity—mostly on-road but many also enjoy off-road cycling. Playgrounds, soccer and swimming are also quite popular. Among children 12 to 17 years old, bicycling is also the most popular outdoor activity. Other favourites among the older children/ teens include hiking and swimming.
- Frequency: Residents visit parks and open spaces in the City very regularly. A majority report going weekly or more often (72%) and 6-in-10 say they visit multiple times weekly.
- Barriers: Lack of time is the most mentioned obstacle to visiting City parks more often. The next most mentioned barriers are lack of parking, difficult access/too far away and feeling unsafe (particularly by women). Other obstacles of note include: being too crowded, poor maintenance/ conditions, lack of interest and excessive noise.

### Satisfaction and Improvements Desired

- Most Appreciated: Pathways are the most appreciated park amenity. Other amenities of note include natural areas, park washrooms, unprogrammed green space and waterfront/beach areas.
- Satisfaction: Overall satisfaction with Victoria's parks and open spaces is very high with 9-in-10 residents at least 'somewhat' satisfied and 6-in-10 'very' satisfied.
  - In terms of specific park amenities and facilities, residents are satisfied with most aspects.
  - Topping the list are waterfront and beach access, flower displays, pathways and natural areas.
     Other aspects well-regarded by a majority of randomly sampled residents include unprogrammed greenspace, outdoor sport fields, playgrounds and court facilities.
  - Satisfaction is weakest for park washrooms, offleash dog areas, and outdoor fitness equipment.
- Additions/Improvements: When asked what amenities are missing or need improvement, most residents have no suggestion. Among desired changes having 'more' of the following are most mentioned: more parks/green space or natural areas, more washroom facilities, more off-leash dog areas and more shared-use pathways (cycling, walking, etc.).





### Executive Overview (cont'd)

### **Important Objectives for Future Parks Systems**

- Respondents rated the importance of 12 objectives for guiding the future of Victoria's parks system.
- All 12 objectives are considered important by at least a majority of residents (70% or more), but clearly the most important is:
  - 'protecting and highlighting natural areas and environmental stewardship'.

Three-quarters of residents believe this objective is 'very important' and nearly everyone agrees that this is an important guideline.

- Several other objectives are 'very important' to at least half/almost half of residents, but standing out are:
  - 'addressing climate change' (64% very important)
  - and 'encouraging community gardening and local food production' (61% very important).

#### **Communications**

- While the current methods used by the City to communicate with the public about parks and open spaces amenities and issues are considered effective by the majority of residents, a sizeable proportion think there is room for improvement (39%).
- The most preferred methods of communication to help increase awareness of parks and open spaces are online interactive maps showing parks, amenities and walking routes. About half of residents would prefer this type of online resource.
- Better signage is preferred by about one-quarter.



# **Detailed Findings**





# Participation in Outdoor Recreational Activities

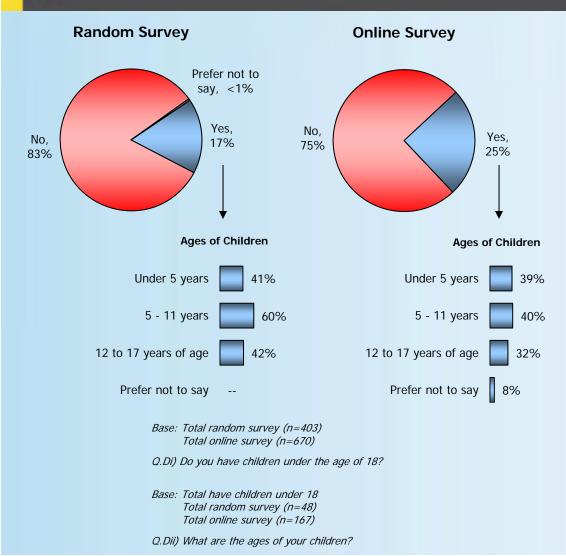
	Random survey <u>Unaided</u> (403) %	Online survey <u>List aided</u> (670) %
Walking	52	83
Bicycle	34	63
Only on-road	19	29
Both off-road and on-road	13	34
Only off-road	3	3
Hiking	27	62
Running/ jogging	15	31
Swimming	11	2
Tennis	10	22
Dog walking	10	33
Kayaking, canoeing	7	25
Soccer	6	10
Baseball/ softball	5	6
Golf	5	16
Gardening	4	50
Basketball	4	8
Boating/ fishing	3	13
Picnicking/ socializing	3	55
Skiing/ snowshoeing/ snowboarding	2	<1
Skateboarding	1	6
Windsurfing/ kite boarding	1	3
Bird watching	1	23
Playgrounds (natural play, sand play, obstacle courses, etc.)	1	1
Rock climbing	1	7
Rugby	1	3
Lawn bowling	1	13
Lacrosse	<1	1
Field hockey	<1	1
Pickleball	<1	4
Cricket	-	1
Other	17	14
None	8	<1
Q.1) What outdoor recreational activities do you participate in on a summer and winter months.	a regular basis? Please ti	hink of both

- Random sample respondents were asked to name the types of outdoor recreational activities that they participate in on a regular basis, including both summer and winter months.
- Walking is the most popular outdoor recreational activity among residents 15 years of age and over. Cycling is the next most common outdoor pursuit, followed by hiking.
- Participants in the open access on-line survey appear more active and engaged in activities than the general population. However, note that on-line respondents were provided with a checklist whereas telephone respondents volunteered their activities unprompted. This difference could account to some extent for higher levels of response in the online survey.
- Note that the analysis in the remainder of the report will focus on the random telephone survey findings.





# Children Under 18 Years of Age in Household



- While most City of Victoria residents do not have children under 18 years of age at home, about one-in-six report that they do. The children are distributed across all age groupings but with more in the 5-11 year age range.
- Note that a slightly higher proportion of on-line respondents report children in the household (25%).





## Child Participation in Outdoor Recreational Activities

Children between 5 and 11 years old	Random survey <u>Unaided</u> (27)* %	Online survey <u>List aided</u> (67) %	
Bicycle	52	93	
Only on-road	34	22	
Both off-road and on-road	10	64	
Only off-road	8	9	
Playgrounds (natural play, sand play, obstacle courses, etc.)	32	6	
Soccer	31	52	
Swimming	29	2	
Hiking	18	61	
Baseball/ softball	16	21	
Skateboarding	8	33	
Tennis	8	36	
Walking	7	78	
Running/ jogging	5	33	
Kayaking, canoeing	3	37	
Lacrosse	3	3	
Basketball	3	22	
Picnicking/ socializing	-	67	
Dog walking	-	28	
Boating/ fishing	-	24	
Gardening	-	21	
Rock climbing	-	19	
Bird watching	-	13	
Golf	-	10	
Rugby	-	6	
Field hockey	-	6	
Pickleball	-	6	
Other	22	8	
None	6	-	
O.2a) What type of recreation or cultural activities does you child or children between 5 and 11 years enjoy?  *Caution: Small base sizes			

- Bicycling is the most favoured outdoor activity for children 5 to 11 years of age. Most ride on-road, but many children cycle off-road as well.
- Other popular activities among this age group are playgrounds, soccer and swimming, followed by hiking and baseball/softball.\*
- Open access online respondents selected responses from an extensive aided list and so may include activities that may be done with less frequency. The following are other activities that were commonly chosen online: walking, dog walking, picnicking/ socializing, running/jogging, among many other activities.
- \*NB: Playgrounds and swimming receive little mention from the online respondents, but are more prominent in the random survey, although the base size is small. The random telephone survey reflects top-of-mind recall, and so, likely activities done more frequently.





## Child Participation in Outdoor Recreational Activities, cont.

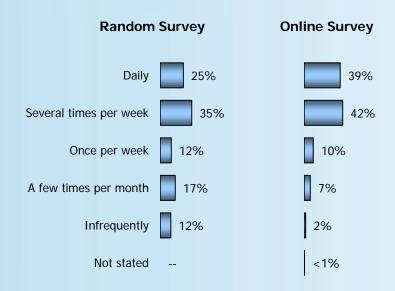
Children between 12 and 17 years old	Random survey <u>Unaided</u> (22)* %	Online survey <u>List aided</u> (53) %	
Bicycle	59	89	
Only on-road	27	25	
Both off-road and on-road	23	62	
Only off-road	9	4	
Hiking	36	62	
Swimming	32	6	
Baseball/ softball	20	19	
Kayaking, canoeing	18	34	
Soccer	16	40	
Running/ jogging	12	43	
Skateboarding	12	30	
Walking	11	70	
Windsurfing/ kite boarding	6	2	
Tennis	6	25	
Dog walking	3	45	
Basketball	3	26	
Field hockey	2	15	
Picnicking/ socializing	-	55	
Rock climbing	-	34	
Gardening	-	15	
Boating/ fishing	-	13	
Rugby	-	13	
Pickleball	-	8	
Bird watching	-	6	
Golf	-	4	
Lacrosse	-	4	
Cricket	-	2	
Lawn bowling	-	2	
Other	29	11	
None	3	2	
Q.2b) What type of recreation or cultural activities does you child or children between 12 and 17 years enjoy? *Caution: Small base sizes			

- Bicycling is also the most popular outdoor activity among children 12 to 17 years of age. Again, while most ride on-road, off-road is also quite popular among older child cyclists.
- Other favourite activities among the older children/teens include hiking and swimming\*, followed by baseball/ softball, kayaking/canoeing and soccer.
- Selecting their responses from an extensive aided list, open access online respondents indicate that these activities are also quite popular: walking, dog walking, picnicking/ socializing, running/jogging, among many other activities.
- \*NB: Swimming was mentioned unaided in the random survey (although the base size is small), but few open access respondents chose it. When given a long list of items in a self-administered survey, the selected items may include activities that are done but with less frequency.





# Frequency of Visiting City Parks or Open Spaces



- Residents visit City parks and open spaces very regularly with a majority saying weekly or more (72%) and 6-in-10 going multiple times a week.
- Frequency is quite similar across age and gender.
- Note that this study was conducted in July, so may reflect summer patterns more than winter.

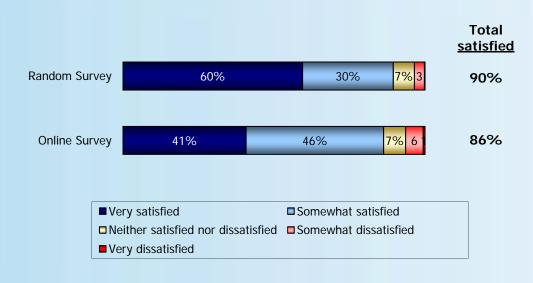
Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.3) How often do you visit a City of Victoria park or open space?





# Satisfaction With Access to Parks and Open Spaces



 Overall, 9-in-10 residents are satisfied with their access to parks and open spaces in the City of Victoria and a majority (60%) are 'very satisfied'.

Base: Total stating an opinion Random survey (n=403) Online survey (n=519)

Q.4a) Overall, how satisfied are you with access to parks and open spaces available in City of Victoria? Are you:





# Reasons for Dissatisfaction

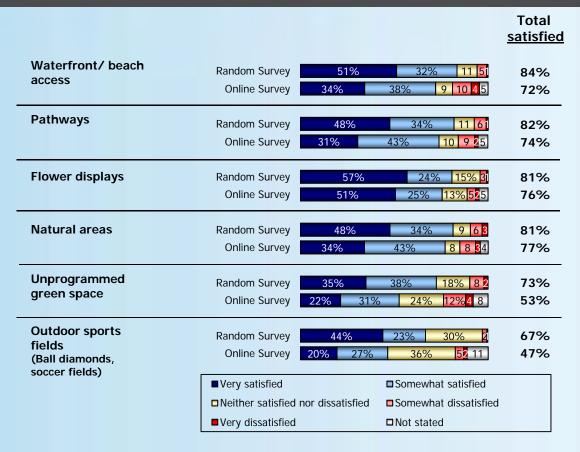
	Random <u>Survey</u> (14)* %	Online <u>Survey</u> (n/a)
Not enough parks	65	-
Lack of accessibility/ hard to get to/ lack of parking	20	-
Lack of off-leash dog areas	19	-
Poor maintenance	16	-
Lack of amenities	11	-
Homeless people/ camps	9	-
Base: Total dissatisfied		
Q.4b) Why do you say that?		
*Caution: Small base sizes		

 The very small group who are not satisfied cite 'not enough parks' as the main reason.





# Satisfaction with Aspects of Park Amenities/Facilities



- In general, residents are satisfied with most aspects of the park amenities and facilities in their community.
- At the top of the list are waterfront and beach access, flower displays, pathways, and natural areas.
- Other aspects regarded as satisfactory by a majority of randomly selected residents include unprogrammed greenspace, outdoor sport fields, playgrounds and court facilities.

Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

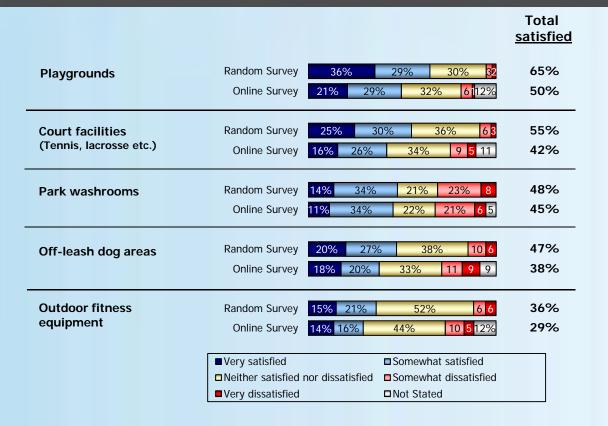
Q.5a-k) How satisfied are you with each of the following facilities or park amenities in your community?

Continued...





## Satisfaction with Aspects of Park Amenities/Facilities (cont.)



 Satisfaction is weakest for park washrooms, off-leash dog areas, and outdoor fitness equipment.

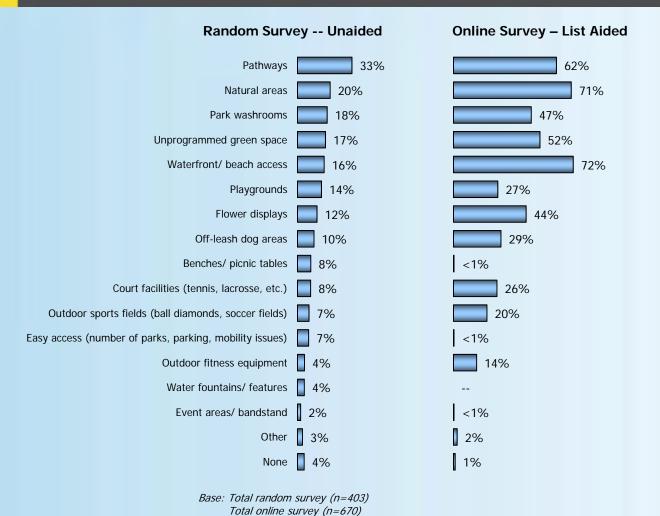
Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.5a-k) How satisfied are you with each of the following facilities or park amenities in your community?





# Park Amenities Most Appreciated



Q.6) What park amenities do you appreciate the most?

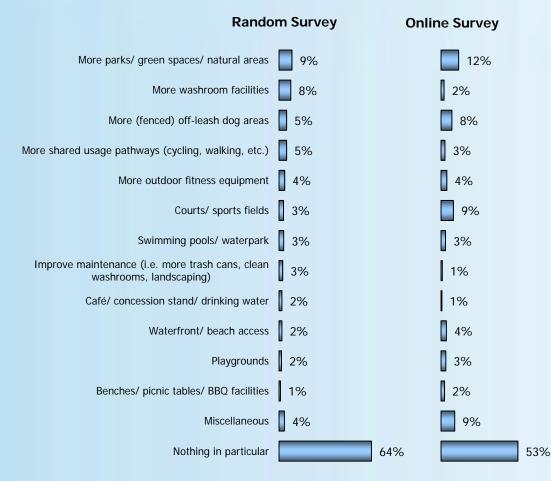
- Pathways are the most commonly identified as the most appreciated park amenity.
- While many other amenities are named unprompted to varying degrees by random sample respondents, those identified somewhat more include natural areas, park washrooms, unprogrammed green space and waterfront/beach areas.

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# Missing Amenities in City Parks and Open Spaces



- The majority of residents do not think any particular amenity is missing from City of Victoria parks and open spaces.
- Those who do name missing amenities tend to say they would like to see more of the following: more parks/green space or natural areas, more washroom facilities, more off-leash dog areas and more shared usage pathways (cycling, walking, etc.).
- Online survey respondents are most likely to name more parks/green spaces and natural areas, courts/sports fields and more (or fenced) off-leash dog areas.

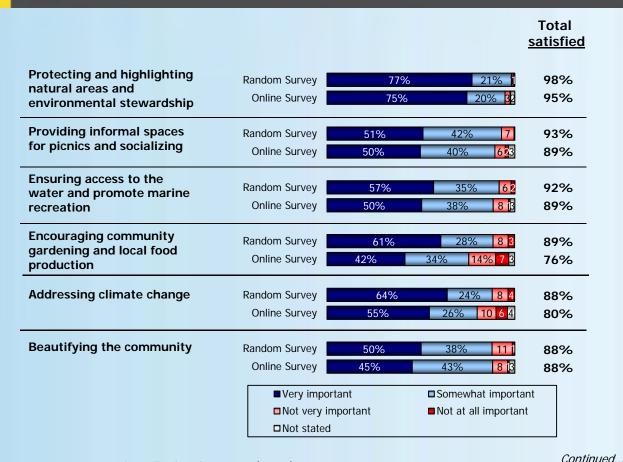
Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.7) Are there parks and open space amenities that are missing in the City of Victoria?





# Importance of Objectives in Future Parks Systems



Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.8a-I) How important to you are each of the following objectives for guiding the future of Victoria's parks system?

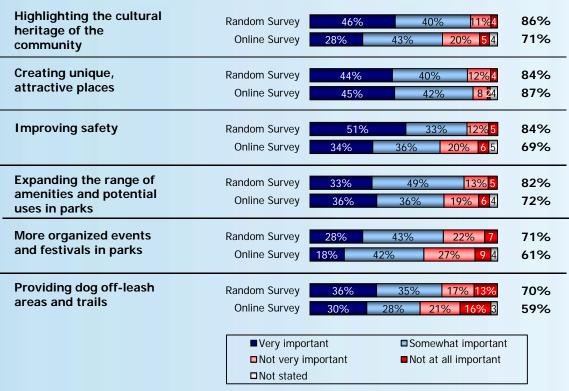
- Residents were asked to rate the importance of 12 objectives for guiding the future of Victoria's parks system.
- All 12 are considered important by at least a majority of residents (70% or more), but clearly the most important is 'protecting and highlighting natural areas and environmental stewardship'.
   Three-quarters of residents believe this objective is 'very important' and nearly everyone agrees that this is an important guideline.
- Several other objectives are 'very important' to at least half/almost half of residents, but standing out are 'addressing climate change' (64% very important) and 'encouraging community gardening and local food production' (61% very important).





# Importance of Objectives in Future Parks Systems (cont.)





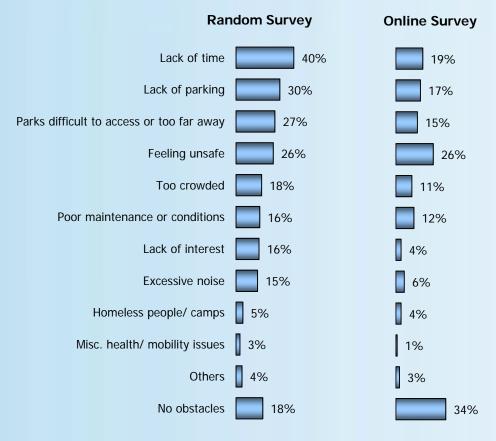
Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.8a-I) How important to you are each of the following objectives for guiding the future of Victoria's parks system?





# Obstacles to Visiting City Parks More Frequently



- Respondents were presented with a list of possible obstacles that could keep them from visiting the City's parks more often.
- The following are the most common barriers to visiting more frequently:
  - Lack of time is the most mentioned.
  - Lack of parking, difficult access/too far away and feeling unsafe (all stated particularly by women) are next on the list of barriers.
  - Other obstacles noted include: being too crowded, poor maintenance/ conditions, lack of interest and excessive noise.

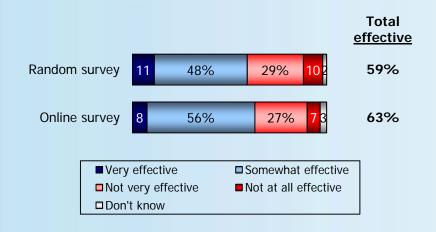
Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.9) Do any of the following keep you from visiting the City's parks more frequently?





# Effective Methods of Communicating



- A majority of residents think that the current methods used by the City to communicate with the public about parks and open spaces amenities and issues are effective.
- However, a sizeable proportion think there is room for improvement (39%).
- There are no differences in the findings by demographic segments.

Base: Total random survey (n=403) Total online survey (n=670)

Q.11) How effective are the current City of Victoria methods of communicating around parks and open spaces amenities and issues?





### Preferred Method to Increase Awareness of Parks

### **Random Survey**



- The most preferred method of communication to help increase awareness of parks and open spaces are online interactive maps showing parks, amenities and walking routes. About half of residents would prefer this online resource.
- Better signage is preferred by about onequarter.

Base: Total (n=403) Total online (N/A)

Q.12) Which of the following would be most helpful to you in increasing your awareness of the parks and open spaces in Victoria?



# **Demographics**





### Demographic Profile

	Random <u>Sample</u> (403) %	Online <u>Sample</u> (670) %
Gender		
Male	47	44
Female	53	51
Other/ refused	-	5
Age		
15 to 24	11	4
25 to 39	30	25
40 to 59	27	33
60 to 79	25	35
80+	5	1
Refused	3	3
Neighbourhood of residence		
Fairfield	16	20
James Bay	13	9
Victoria West	9	12
Hillside-Quadra	12	8▼
Fernwood	9	6▼
Downtown	11	4▼
Rockland	5	8
Oaklands	7	4▼
Burnside Gorge	7	3▼
North and South Jubilee	5	3
Gonzales	2	3
North Park	4	1▼
Harris Green	1	1
Outside of Victoria	-	15▲
Refused	-	2

- The random sample was weighted to match census statistics on the basis of age within gender. The on-line survey sample is unweighted.
- Note that the on-line survey includes 15% who reside outside of the City of Victoria.
- Differences of note between the two samples are indicated by the following notations:
  - ▲ Significantly higher
  - ▼ Significantly lower





## Demographic Profile

	Random <u>Sample</u> (403) %	Online <u>Sample</u> (670) %
Personal family situation		
Person living alone	28▲	19
Person living with parents	10▲	2
Person living with friends	4	3
Spouse or partner, no children at home	35	45▲
Spouse or partner with children at home	17	25▲
Single parent with children at home	3	3
Prefer not to say	2	2
Employment		
Employed	64	62
Full-time	45	48
Part-time	10	15
Self-employed	11	-
Not employed	39	42
Retired	24	32▲
Unemployed and not looking for work	7	2
Homemaker and not employed outside of the home	2	3
Student	7	6
Full-time	7	4
Part-time	1	2
Prefer not to say	1	3
Home ownership		
Own	58	72▲
Rent	39	26
Prefer not to say	2	3





## Demographic Profile

	Random <u>Sample</u> (403) %	Online <u>Sample</u> (670) %
Years lived in Victoria		
5 or less	10	18
6 – 9	16	14
10 – 19	28	25
20 – 29	22	15
30 – 39	10	11
40+	13	13
Prefer not to say	1	5
Average	21	20
Physical limitations		
Yes	11▲	6
No	89	91
Prefer not to say	-	3

# Appendix C List of Actions

Action	Description	Timeframe	Project Type	Priority	Low	Medium	High
1.1.1	Develop a Biodiversity Strategy.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•		
1.1.2	Continue to implement the Urban Forest Master Plan.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•		
1.1.3	Develop targets for increasing the use of native plants and the quantity and quality of native ecosystems.	MEDIUM	PLANNING	2	•		
1.2.1	Update the Environmental Management Standards for park operations and maintenance that will increase the resilience of parks and open spaces.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•		
1.2.2	Create demonstration projects showing best practices for sustainability within the parks system.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	2	•	•	
1.2.3	Identify opportunities to daylight or celebrate culverted streams.	SHORT	PLANNING		•	•	•
1.2.3 (B)	Implement stream daylighting projects (based on Short Term Planning Action 1.2.3, above).	LONG	CAPITAL	3			•
1.3.1	Incorporate more vegetation in areas of the city most vulnerable to the urban heat island effect.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	2	•		
1.3.2	Use vegetation to shade impervious areas and buildings to reduce the heat island effect and consider green roofs on park buildings and shelters.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL	2	•		
1.3.3	Identify plants and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change and develop management strategies to help mitigate impacts.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL		•		
1.3.4	Identify marine shorelines within the parks system that are vulnerable to climate change impacts and develop mitigation strategies.	LONG	CAPITAL		•		
1.3.4 (B)	Implement mitigation strategies related to climate change impacts on marine shorelines (based on Short Term Planning Action 1.3.4, above).	LONG	CAPITAL				•
1.3.5	Reduce impervious surfaces, particularly along the waterfront.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL	2			•
1.3.6	Explore the potential to complete a Green Shores shoreline restoration project.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	3			•

Action	Description	Timeframe	Project Type	Priority	Low	Medium	High
2.1.1	Update and/or consolidate the City's land use policies related to park land designation including consolidating park properties with multiple titles, updating the OCP with the current inventory and developing park zoning designations within the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.	SHORT	PLANNING		•		
2.1.2	Develop a Park Development and Acquisition Strategy, develop and maintain a list of priority park land acquisitions. Coordinate with the Local Area Plans process.	SHORT	PLANNING		•		
2.1.3	Implement a life-cycle analysis framework to ensure accurate forecasting and planning for significant maintenance, upgrades, repairs, and replacement of park amenities such as washrooms, sports fields and courts, playgrounds, and, trails.	SHORT	PLANNING		•		
2.1.4	Adopt park design guidelines for park furniture and amenities.	SHORT	PLANNING		•		
2.1.5	Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, drinking fountains, lighting and food services at select parks.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	2		•	
2.1.6	Establish a list of priority improvement projects to address safety issues and other barriers to park use.	SHORT	CAPITAL		•	•	•
2.2.1	Identify existing underutilized spaces and develop a strategy for how to encourage broader use.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•	•	•
2.2.2	Incorporate a variety of spaces for socializing and group gatherings into park spaces.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL	2	•	•	•
2.2.3	Develop areas in the parks and open spaces system that encourage mental restoration and relaxation.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL	2	•	•	•
2.2.4	Develop a Dogs in Parks Strategy that builds off of the experiences of the existing Paws in Parks Program.	SHORT	PLANNING		•	•	
2.3.1	Identify new health and fitness cluster locations where outdoor fitness amenities, walking areas, playgrounds, and sports amenities are located near each other.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	2	•	•	
2.3.2	Establish a target and implementation plan for the provision of play spaces within an 800 meter walking distance of 99% of households.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•		
2.3.3	Establish and maintain standards of care to ensure safe, high quality play features.	SHORT	CAPITAL	1	•	•	

Action	Description	Timeframe	Project Type	Priority	Low	Medium	High
2.3.4	Identify a location for a new all ages and abilities accessible water/spray park.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	3			•
2.3.5	Develop an All-Wheels Strategy.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•		
2.3.6	Identify a location and develop a second skate park that allows for a variety of activities (i.e. roller blading, scooters, and BMX inclusive), ages and abilities.	SHORT	CAPITAL				•
2.3.7	Develop a process to evaluate and assess demand for new/emerging activities.	SHORT	CAPITAL	2	•	•	•
2.4.1	Develop a Sports and Facility Development Strategy.	MEDIUM	PLANNING			•	
2.4.2	Continue to conduct annual meetings with sports league representatives and other user groups.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•		
2.5.1	Incorporate community gardening and related amenities into the parks system.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL		•		
2.5.2	Incorporate more public and barrier-free features into or adjacent to community gardens	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL	2	•		
2.5.3	Work with other significant land owners, both public and private, to identify locations for urban food production and community gardening.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•		
2.6.1	Create a wayfinding and signage strategy for the parks and open spaces system.	SHORT	PLANNING			•	•
2.6.2	Develop digital tools and strategies that help people find and explore Victoria's parks and open spaces.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•		
2.6.3	Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•		
2.6.4	Prioritize the development of active transportation linkages and infrastructure that connects residents and visitors to parks.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•	•	
2.6.5	Identify strategies to reduce user conflicts on the Dallas Road pathway.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•	•	•
2.6.6	Improve waterfront access and public uses along the City's waterfront spaces.	OPERATIONAL	CAPITAL		•	•	•
3.1.1	Review and amend the Park Regulation Bylaw to allow limited commercial activities in the parks system.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•		
3.1.2	Identify opportunities and obstacles to increased activation of Beacon Hill Park.	MEDIUM	PLANNING		•		

Action	Description	Timeframe	Project Type	Priority	Low	Medium	High
3.1.3	Develop 'hands on' experiences, interpretive elements, and educational programming that celebrate Victoria's special features, unique character, and natural environment.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	2	•	•	
3.1.4	Enable the animation of Victoria's parks and open spaces by developing a permitting process for temporary arts and culture installations and activities.	MEDIUM	PLANNING	2	•		
3.1.5	Incorporate outdoor art projects and programs into the parks and open spaces system through the existing artist-in-residence program.	MEDIUM	PLANNING	2	•		
3.1.6	Create an Event Hosting Guidelines to help facilitate events hosting by community organizations and the public.	MEDIUM	PLANNING	2	•		
3.1.7	Incorporate support infrastructure and amenities at key parks to host special events on a regular basis.	MEDIUM	CAPITAL	2	•	•	
3.1.8	Collaborate with Tourism Victoria on promotional materials that highlight the special features of the parks system.	MEDIUM	PLANNING	2	•		
4.1.1	Investigate the potential for Memorandums of Understanding with the provincial and federal governments, School District #61, the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, and other land owners responsible for key public spaces to coordinate planning and identify efficiencies in operations.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING		•		
4.1.2	Develop partnerships with First Nations, researchers, government and institutions to advance cultural knowledge, research and innovation in urban ecology.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING	3	•		
4.1.3	Work with stakeholders to identify ways that Cityowned park lands can help protect and enhance the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING	2	•	•	
41.4	Work with Island Health, other municipalities and stakeholders to identify projects that enhance active living, active transportation and the benefits of balanced lifestyles through joint planning, programming and promotion.	OPERATIONAL	PLANNING	2	•		
4.1.5	Create a Park Volunteer Policy and Program	SHORT	PLANNING		•		







#### Acknowledgements

The City of Victoria recognizes the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations in whose traditional territories we live and work 'Hay swx qa'.

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# Chapter 1

#### Introduction

#### 1.1 Purpose

Parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreational facilities are critical components of a complete community. They help to improve the livability of urban areas, enable active lifestyles, promote personal health, and provide spaces for respite, celebration, and gathering. Parks and open spaces also play an important role in providing animal and plant habitat and maintaining ecosystem services (City of Victoria, 2012).

The City of Victoria is expected to grow by more than 20,000 people over the next fifteen years (City of Victoria, 2012). As Victoria continues to grow and change, thoughtful and strategic planning of our large parks and open spaces is essential to ensure that the development of parks and amenities aligns with changing community values.

As the third largest park in the City of Victoria, Topaz Park offers a unique opportunity to deliver expanded and improved recreational facilities for our growing community. The Topaz Park Improvement Plan is a high-level vision for Topaz Park that establishes desired renovations to existing park programs, new types of amenities, and other park upgrades. It also provides a strategic implementation framework to achieve the complete park vision over the 10-year time horizon of this plan.

#### 1.2 How to use this plan

This plan determines what kinds of elements should be included in the park, and proposes an approximate size, location, and implementation priority. Prior to implementation, each of the park areas identified in this plan will require a detailed design phase to determine accurate design and cost estimates.

The following implementation tools are included in this plan:

#### • Conceptual Improvement Plan (Section 4.2/4.3)

The park vision and guiding principles determine the overarching goal for the future of Topaz Park and provide the framework for all future work. A conceptual diagram establishes a proposed layout of future park amenities.

#### • Design Guidelines (Section 4.4)

The plan includes design guidelines for each of the future park areas. These are the detailed considerations that will inform future detailed design and construction. The design guidelines reflect the vision statement, public feedback, goals in overarching City plans, and operational needs.

#### • Implementation Strategy (Section 5.0)

The implementation strategy sets out priority implementation phases and high level cost implications. A funding strategy outlines potential funding sources for design and construction.

#### 1.3 Related Plans and Policies

The Topaz Park Improvement Plan is informed by other City plans and policies and furthers the City's strategic directions and goals. In developing this improvement plan, staff reviewed a variety of guiding documents including the Official Community Plan, the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan, and the Urban Forest Management Plan. The creation of each of these plans represents the results of extensive public engagement to identify key priorities and directions for the City.



Policy Framework

The following is a summary of some of the guiding principles and objectives that have informed the creation of this plan:

#### Official Community Plan (2012)

The Official Community Plan is a 30-year framework of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land management in the City of Victoria. The plan provides a framework to shape and guide present and proposed development towards long-term goals for achieving a more sustainable community by 2041. The Official Community Plan identifies numerous goals related to parks and open spaces, along with other aspects of City planning, which have been considered and incorporated into this master plan. Key direction from the Official Community Plan includes:

- Goal 9(A): Victoria is an active community where everyone enjoys convenient access to community parks, open spaces, facilities, amenities and programs close to where they live.
- Objective 9(c): That parks, open spaces and facilities contribute to the enhancement and restoration of ecological functions.
- Objective 9(d): That a diversity of facilities, services, and programming enables broad community access and participation in an active lifestyle.
- Objective 9(e): That parks and recreational facilities are designed to achieve multiple benefits and accommodate a diversity of people and activities.

#### Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (2017)

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is a roadmap to guide planning, management, and investment in the City of Victoria's parks and open spaces over the next 25 years. The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is a strategic-level document that identifies broad goals and planning initiatives, and is used as a tool to inform more detailed planning work that takes place through individual park plans such as the Topaz Park Improvement Plan. Key direction from the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan includes:

- Continue to implement the Urban Forest Management Plan, and increase the use of native plants and the quantity and quality of native ecosystems (1.1.2/1.1.3).
- Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, drinking fountains, lighting and food services at select parks (2.1.5).
- Maximize efficient use of parks and open spaces to improve multifunctionality wherever possible (2.2.1).
- Incorporate a variety of spaces for socializing and group gatherings into park spaces (2.2.2).
- Identify new health and fitness cluster locations where outdoor fitness amenities, walking areas, playground, and sports amenities are located near each other (2.3.1).
- Identify a location and develop a second skate park that allows for a variety of activities (ie. roller blading, scooters, and BMX inclusive) (2.3.6).
- Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle (2.6.3).
- Incorporate support infrastructure and amenities at key parks to host special events on a regular basis (3.1.7).

#### Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)

The Urban Forest Master Plan provides guidance on the management and enhancement of treed environments throughout the City of Victoria. It is a high-level plan that provides direction to help the municipality invest in and maintain its urban forest for the next 20 years and beyond. The Urban Forest Master Plan includes the following relevant goals and direction:

- The urban forest contributes significantly to the beautification and local character of the public realm.
- The urban forest is part of the social fabric of the city, providing a safe place for festivals, smaller social gatherings and the enjoyment of nature.
- Residents enjoy significant health and recreational benefits from the pubic urban forest.
- Favour the planting of larger growing tree species wherever practical.
- Expand and enhance the urban forest on public and private lands.

#### Create Victoria Arts & Culture Master Plan (2017)

Create Victoria is a five-year arts and culture master plan designed to nurture conditions for creativity in the City, including festival and special event planning. Create Victoria includes direction for special events in parks, including:

- Use parks, open spaces, community centres and schools to act as central creative notes in neighbourhoods (1.1.1).
- Incorporate support infrastructure and amenities at key parks to host special events on a regular basis (1.3.2).

#### 1.4 Planning Process

Many inputs informed the creation of the Topaz Park Improvement Plan. This plan is reflective of overarching City policies, including the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan. It also reflects community feedback, condition assessments of existing amenities, City-wide needs, site constraints, and stakeholder input.



Planning Inputs

The Topaz Park Improvement Plan was conceived of as a three phase process, carried out from May 2017 to May 2018.



Topaz Park Improvement Plan

#### Phase 1: Inventory and Analysis

May - August 2017

The initial phase of this project included an inventory and analysis of current park conditions, a comprehensive policy review, a review of recreational needs across the City and the region, and a review of best practices from other multi-sport recreation parks. Public consultation focused on collecting feedback on existing park conditions, and generating new ideas for future changes.

#### Phase 2: Preliminary Concept Plans

September 2017 - January 2018

This phase consisted of developing a guiding park vision and two high-level concept plans for Topaz Park based on the results of data gathered in Phase 1. This formed the basis for a 6-week public engagement effort.

#### Phase 3: Final Concept and Improvement Plan

February 2018 - May 2018

The final phase of this project included a detailed review of stakeholder feedback and a comprehensive needs analysis based on City-wide and regional recreational inventories. Weekly meetings with a staff steering committee were used to arrive at the proposed programs included in the final concept plan. External consultants were retained to conduct a feasibility assessment and preliminary design of the proposed turf field expansion, conduct a full parking impact assessment, and assess site accessibility. A series of detailed design guidelines were developed to guide future development of each of the park areas. These design guidelines were the focus of a final phase of public engagement.



# Chapter 2

#### **Inventory and Analysis**

#### 2.1 Location & Context

Topaz Park sits on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen People. Located north of downtown in the Hillside Quadra neighbourhood, it is the third largest park in Victoria (10ha/24.85ac). Topaz Park is the main active recreation park in the city, and is home to the City's only artificial turf field and numerous other features such as a lacrosse box, several sports fields, baseball diamonds, dog leash-optional areas, fitness equipment and a playground (see Fig.2). The park hosts a variety of sport and community events each year.

Topaz Park is bordered by Blanshard Street to the west, Topaz Avenue to the south, Finalyson Street to the north, and Glasgow Street to the east. This park is located approximately 350m from the Saanich border, and users of Topaz Park may also frequent nearby Saanich park and recreation facilities such as Rutledge Park, Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, and Cedar Hill Park.

Topaz Park has been operating as a public park since 1929. The northern portion of the site (where the Finlayson artificial turf field now sits) was purchased in 1967 as an extension to the park. These lands were previously part of a large clay quarry and brickyard operated by Baker Brick and Tile. Historical air photos indicate that the clay quarry was open into the early 1960's.





Topaz Park, Glasgow field (left), Finlayson artificial turf field (right)

#### 2.2 Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Snapshot

Hillside Quadra is approximately 166 hectares (410 acres), located in the north central portion of the City. There is a secondary commercial centre along Quadra Street, multi-family housing around the centre and along parts of the arterial roads, and the remainder of the neighbourhood is residential. There are 25.6 hectares (43 acres) of parks and open spaces in Hillside-Quadra, the majority of which is contained within two large parks, Topaz Park and Summit Park. Approximately 7,254 residents live in Hillside Quadra. Eighty percent of residents live in multi-family dwellings, making access to diverse parks and open spaces critical for this neighbourhood. (City of Victoria, 2017b)

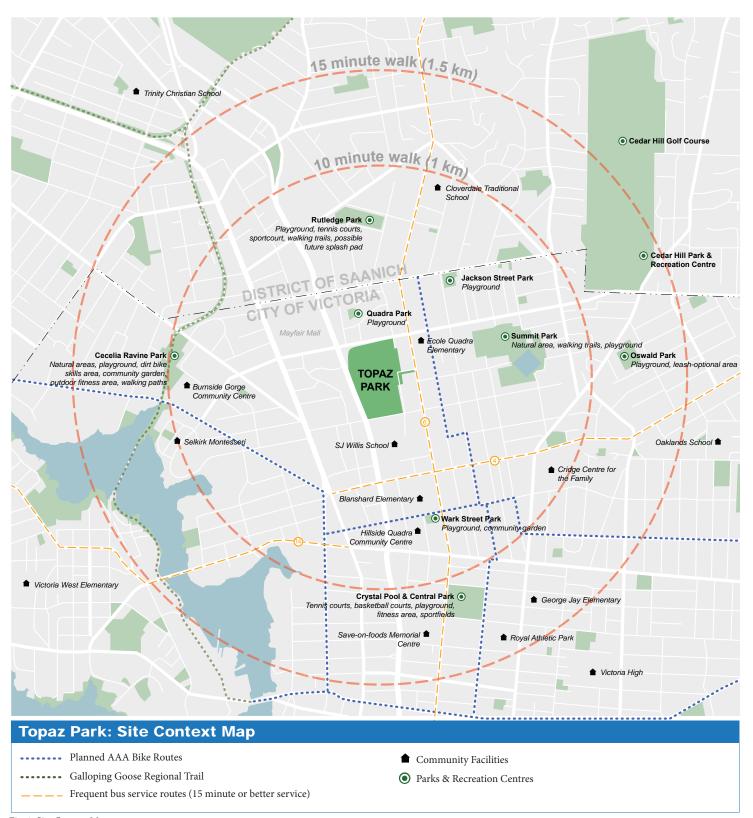


Fig. 1: Site Context Map

#### 2.3 Current Site Conditions

Topaz Park includes a mix of sports fields, natural areas, and community amenities. The park developed incrementally over time, and has never had an overarching master plan to guide changes. As a result, much of the park space is used inefficiently and many amenities are poorly connected. Key opportunities for future improvements to overall park conditions through the creation of this improvement plan include:

- More thoughtful placement of park amenities to create a more cohesive park experience;
- Improved connectivity to and throughout the park;
- · More efficient use of park space to accommodate new types of activities and increase park visits;
- Infrastructure upgrades to improve user experience and use of park facilities; and,
- Enhancing existing natural areas and expanding tree canopy coverage.

The condition of park assets vary significantly. Much of the infrastructure is aging and will require replacement in the next 2-10 years. Detail on the characteristics and condition of individual park amenities is described below:

#### 2.3.1 Finlayson Artificial Turf Field

The Finlayson artificial turf field was installed in 2005, and is the only turf field in the City of Victoria. The artificial turf field is Victoria's most popular playing field. In 2017, this field was reserved for 1977 hours (an average of 49 hours per week) for soccer. This represents 100% capacity during prime time (5 hours per weekday, 12 hours per weekend day). The field was used for 59 hours by slo-pitch teams. In 2017, the City collected \$84,515 in reservation revenue from this facility.

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan noted that Victoria is underserved compared to other similar-sized communities for artificial turf fields (City of Victoria, 2017c). There are 14 other artificial turf fields in Greater Victoria. Feedback from regional turf field operators indicate that all prime-time capacity on these fields is currently booked, with waitlists from user groups.

The existing overall turf surface is 123m x 80m and accommodates one full sized 105m x 74m soccer field, which is generally oriented along an east-west axis, and a warm-up area. In addition to the full-sized soccer field, the artificial turf surface has field markings for two 45m x 74m mini soccer fields oriented along the north-south axis. The facility includes a concrete apron that accommodates portable players benches and spectator bleachers, and is lit with 4 perimeter light poles. Perimeter fencing consists of 1.2m tall chain link fencing on 3 sides with tall 4.5m panels along the east end of the field. Based on a 15 year expected lifecycle, the turf surfacing will require renewal within the next 3 years. Feedback from facility users indicate that the surfacing has reached end-of-life.





Artificial turf field, existing conditions



Fig. 2: Current park amenities

#### 2.3.2 Glasgow Grass Field

The Glasgow grass field is a shared use field that accommodates soccer and slo-pitch. A portion of this field is also reserved for general community use, including pick-up sports and a time-limited leash-optional area. The field contains two slo-pitch backstops. The field is too short for both backstops to be used simultaneously; the backstop located in the southeast corner is rarely used. The playing surface is uneven and requires repair, and the slo-pitch infields require resurfacing. This field is frequently too wet to be played on due to a failing subsurface drainage system. A portion of this drainage system was renovated in 2017, which has resulted in improved playing conditions.





Glasgow grass field, existing conditions

#### 2.3.3 Blanshard Grass Field

The Blanshard grass field is a shared use field that accommodates soccer and slo-pitch. The field contains a slo-pitch backstop with dugouts in the southeastern corner. The playing surface is uneven and requires improvement, and the slo-pitch infield requires resurfacing. This field is frequently too wet to be played on, due to a failing subsurface drainage system.





Blanshard grass field, existing conditions

#### 2.3.4 Topaz Grass Field

The Topaz grass field is a lit, sand-based field that accommodates soccer, fastball and slo-pitch. The field was constructed in 1994, and contains a slo-pitch backstop with dugouts and spectator seating in the northeastern corner, perimeter fencing, and pole lights. User feedback suggests that the surfacing requires improvement and does not hold up well to the existing level of use.





Topaz grass field, existing conditions

	WEE	WEEKDAY USE (2017) WEEKEND USE (2017)			17)	
	Available hours	Permit hours	% usage	Available hours	Permit hours	% usage
ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD						
Fall/winter (soccer)	25	25	100%	26	24	92%
Spring/summer (soccer)	25	11.5	46%	26	16.5	63%
GLASGOW GRASS FIELD						
Fall/winter (soccer)	0	0	0%	8	4	50%
Spring/summer (ball)	12.5	10.5	84%	26	10.5	40%
BLANSHARD GRASS FIELD						
Fall/winter (soccer)	0	0	0%	8	4	50%
Spring/summer (ball)	12.5	12.5	100%	26	8.5	33%
TOPAZ GRASS FIELD						
Fall/winter (soccer)	10	9	90%	8	6	75%
Spring/summer (ball)	12.5	10.5	84%	26	8.5	33%

Table 1: Topaz Park sport field usage (by permits issued), 2017

#### 2.3.5 Lacrosse Box

The lacrosse box at Topaz Park is the only facility of its kind in the City of Victoria. There are two similar facilities located in the District of Saanich, one in Oak Bay, and one in Esquimalt. In 2017, the lacrosse box was reserved for 590 hours, and used for a variety of sports include lacrosse and ball hockey. The box is also frequently used for drop-in recreation and for special events. The condition of the lacrosse box requires significant upgrades, including surfacing, boards, fences, and players benches. The use of this facility has decreased in recent years due to the condition of the playing surface; there has been a 50% decrease in bookings over the past 8 years.





Lacrosse box, surfacing repairs (left), players benches (right)

#### 2.3.6 Tennis Courts

Topaz Park previously included 3 tennis courts. The tennis courts were closed in 2013 due to extreme surface degradation caused by tree roots, with an expectation that this asset would be replaced at some point in the future. Given the large trees which have grown around the courts and root systems close to the surface, repair or replacement of this asset in the original location was deemed to be not feasible.





Tennis courts, previous court condition (left) and existing conditions (right)

#### Playground 2.3.7

The current playground equipment was installed in 2005 and features a swing set, slide and a series of climbing structures. This playground was designed for children ages 2-12. Based on its current condition, this playground will require replacement within the next 10 years.





Playground, existing conditions

#### **Outdoor Fitness Equipment** 2.3.8

The existing outdoor fitness equipment was installed in 2014, and is one of five outdoor fitness areas in the City. The fitness area contains nine stations, including an elliptical trainer, hand bike combo, arm and leg press, lower back trainer, air strider, knee raise dip combo, parallel bars, torso bench, and balance beam. The equipment was installed in a temporary location, with a permanent location to be determined through this planning process.





Outdoor fitness equipment, existing conditions

#### 2.3.9 Leash-Optional Areas

Topaz Park contains two leash optional areas; a full-time leash optional area between Topaz Avenue and the playground, and a time limited leash-optional area on Glasgow grass field (available in the morning and evening, when the field is not in use). Both of these areas were designated 'leash-optional' as part of the City's 'Paws in Parks' program in the early 2000's. The full-time leash-optional area is a sloping site which frequently experiences drainage issues in the winter, especially along the Glasgow frontage. The site is currently partially fenced, with chainlink fencing along the Glasgow Street frontage, and partial chainlink fencing adjacent to the playground.





Leash-optional area, existing conditions

#### 2.3.10 Parking

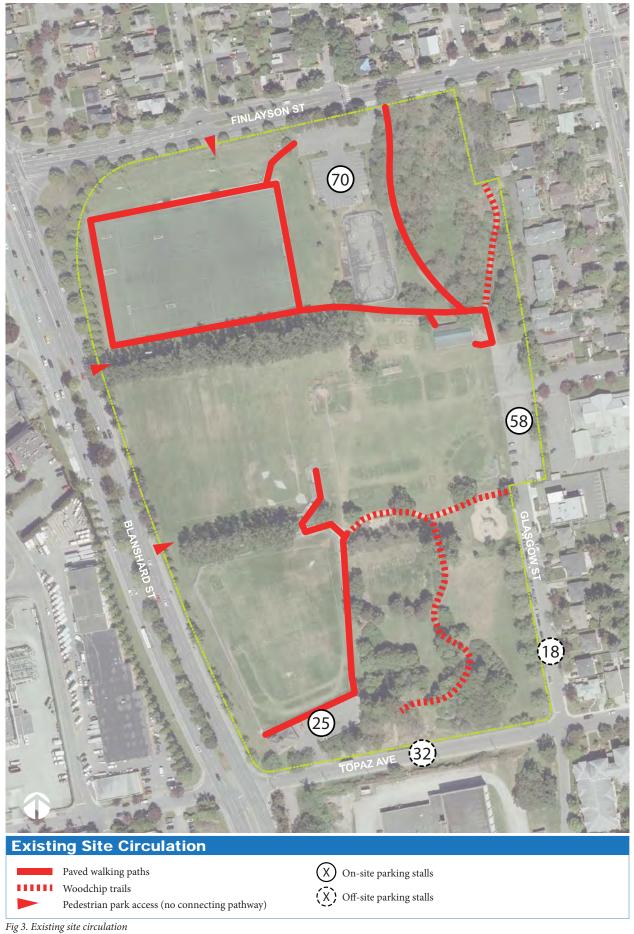
Topaz Park contains three surface parking lots, with a total of 153 spaces. In addition, there are 263 on-street parking spaces within a five-minute walk of Topaz Park; 78 of these spaces are currently unrestricted to the public, 185 of these spaces are currently restricted to residential parking only. The recommended number of onsite stalls to accommodate average peak demand is 129 stalls. The locations of publicly accessible stalls within and directly adjacent to the park are shown in Fig. 3.

A complete parking study has been completed as part of this project, and is attached as Appendix B.





 $Glasgow\ parking\ lot\ (left);\ Finlayson\ parking\ lot\ (right)$ 



#### 2.3.11 Pathways

There are three main pathways in Topaz Park: (1) a paved walkway connecting the artificial turf field to the main public washroom building; (2) a paved walkway and alternate chip walkway connecting the Glasgow parking lot to Finalyson Avenue; and (3) a combination chip/paved walkway connecting the playground, fitness area, and Topaz grass sports field. A woodchip trail partially connects the wooded area in the southeast section of the park. There are two pedestrian entrances into the park off Blanshard Street, and one pedestrian entrance off Finlayson Street, but no connecting pathways from these entrances into the park. There are no direct, continuous pathway connections crossing the park in either an east-west or north-south direction. The lack of connected walking paths limits the use of this park for walking and jogging, decreases accessibility, and makes it difficult to use multiple facilities in one park visit. The location of existing park pathways is shown in Fig. 3.





Chip trail connecting playground and fitness area (left); Pedestrian entrance off Blanshard St. (right)

#### 2.3.12 Park Buildings

The main washroom building and field house is located on the northwest corner of Glasgow grass field, adjacent to the Glasgow Street parking lot. This washroom contains public washroom stalls, changeroom facilities, referee facilities, and storage. A second washroom building is located in the southwest corner of the park, adjacent to the Topaz Avenue parking lot. This facility contains public washroom stalls and a storage area.





Topaz Avenue washroom (left); Main washroom building (right)

#### 2.3.13 Site Accessibility

The City retained Copley Consulting to conduct a baseline accessibility assessment of Topaz Park. The full report is attached as Appendix D.

The assessment found that a range of improvements could be made to improve park use and meaningful access for visitors with a range of abilities. Key findings include:

- Accessibility from the parking lots could be improved by adjusting the number, layout, and location of accessible parking stalls.
- Improvements to slope and surfacing of existing park pathways would increase mobility.
- Inclusive access could be improved to existing park facilities, including the outdoor fitness area, playground, and spectator areas.
- Improvements to the interior layout of both washroom buildings would improve access and user experience.
- · Clear, standardized, and high-visibility signage throughout the park would aid in overall park legibility.

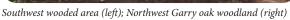
#### 2.3.14 Site Ecology

There are 362 trees within Topaz Park. A majority of trees (67%) are in good condition.

The northeast corner of the site contains a remnant patch of Garry oak woodland ecosystem that has been identified by the federal/provincial Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (See Fig. 4)(Canada, 1998; City of Victoria, 2012). Garry oak woodlands support some of the highest diversity of plants in coastal British Columbia, including a significant number of 'at risk' species. This remnant patch includes exposed bedrock, Garry oak trees, and some deep soil pockets that support a rich meadow ecosystem with wildflowers. Garry oak woodlands are highly threatened; it is estimated that less than 5% of the history Garry oak woodlands remain. (Canada, 1998)

The southeast portion of Topaz Park contains a wooded area with significant underbrush growth, bisected by a series of wood chip trails. Many of the trees along the perimeter of this section were planted when the Topaz grass field was installed in the mid-nineties. The habitat value of this area is relatively low, and could benefit from selective shrub removal, pruning, and replanting with a higher diversity of native species that could enhance biodiversity of this area, improve safety and sightlines, and provide opportunities to integrate new types uses into this area of the park.







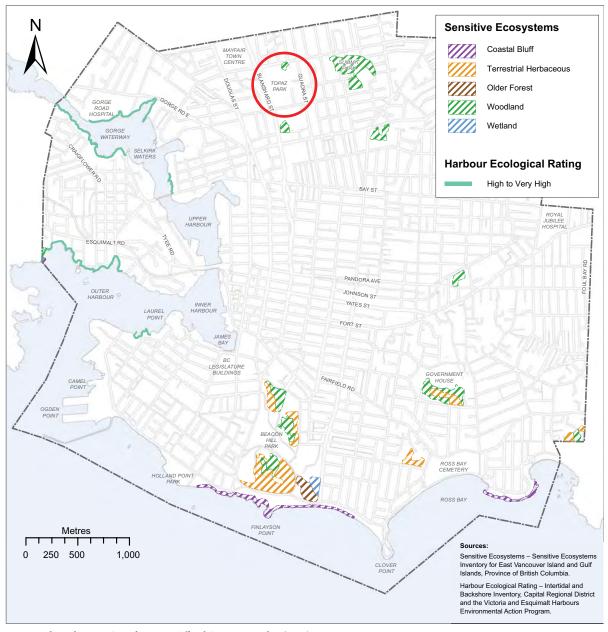


Fig. 4: Ecological Assets, City of Victoria Official Community Plan (2012)



# Chapter 3

# **Consultation & Community Engagement**

Public engagement was an essential component guiding the development of this plan. The goal was to gather meaningful input that would allow the creation of a strategic direction for the park that accurately reflects the community's needs and values.

The public engagement process included a wide range of tools, some targeted to specific stakeholder groups and others seeking to gather input from the general public. The stakeholders, partners, and community organizations who were engaged included sport permit holders, long-time users of various park facilities, the District of Saanich, the local neighbourhood association, and stakeholders and specialists representing potential new park programming.

Over 3,600 people actively participated in public consultation for this project.

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS

- · Develop community-led vision, goals and values
- Identify current demand and future needs
- Develop awareness and support for the final plan

# 3.1 Phase 1 Public Engagement (May-June 2017)

The first phase of public engagement was focused on collecting feedback on existing park conditions, future improvements, and ideas for future changes to the park. Overall, an estimated 1,107 people participated through a range of engagement opportunities including:

- Online survey
- Open house in Topaz Park
- Pop-Up engagement stations at Quadra Village Days, Highland Games, Caffe Fantastico, and the Quadra Village Community Centre
- Presentation to the Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Action Group
- Stakeholder workshop session for sport facility users

### Key findings:

• Lack of programming diversity: There is not enough diversity of uses in Topaz Park. Many respondents were unaware of the full extents of the park, only use a small portion of the park, or don't have a reason

to visit the park at all. Respondents felt that there is not enough programming in the park that meets the needs of the immediate community. Over 1,200 requests for new types of amenities were received, including a bike skills park, skateboard park, pickleball courts, disc golf course, and a spray park.

- Lack of connectivity: There is a lack of pathway connectivity in the park, making it difficult to use
  the park for walking or jogging. Many requests were received for some form of perimeter woodchip
  walking trail. There is a lack of perceived safe walking routes at night. Additional pathway lighting is
  desired, especially connecting the main washroom building to the artificial turf field, and between the
  parking lots of Glasgow and Finlayson Streets.
- Existing facilities need repairs: Repairs are needed to the sports fields, including a new carpet for the artificial turf field, and repairs to the drainage, field surface, infields, and dugouts for the grass sports fields. Repairs are needed to the lacrosse box, including new surfacing and boards. Repairs are needed to the leash-optional area, including perimeter fencing and surfacing/drainage repairs.
- *More support amenities*: More support amenities (e.g. garbage cans, water fountains, bike racks, lighting, signage and wayfinding) are desired throughout the park.

# 3.2 Phase 2 Public Engagement (December 2017 - January 2018)

The second phase of public engagement was focused on collecting feedback on a draft vision statement and two high-level concept plans for Topaz Park based on the results of data gathered in Phase 1. Participants were asked to provide feedback on what they liked most/least about the elements in each concept, and to rank their overall priorities for improvement. They were also asked to provide feedback on two 'big ideas' for the park: repurposing a grass sports field to accommodate different types of activities, and expanding the artificial turf field to accommodate lost field space and increase field capacity.



Topaz Park Concepts for public engagement phase 2: Concept #1 (left); Concept #2 (right)

Over 2,000 residents participated in this phase of engagement through a range of engagement opportunities including:

- Online survey
- Open house at Quadra Village Elementary School/L'Ecole Quadra
- Pop-Up engagement stations at Quadra Village Community Centre
- Presentation to Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Action Group
- Stakeholder workshop session for sport facility users (current and potential future users)
- Outreach to key stakeholder groups, including Victoria Highland Games Association, sports leagues, and Victoria Skateboard Association

### Key findings:

- A majority of people (78%) supported the idea of repurposing a grass sports field to accommodate new types of activities.
- A majority of people (81%) supported the idea of making the artificial turf field larger. It was important to people to try and retain the row of mature black cottonwood trees on the south side of the field.
- A high level of support for diversifying the types of activities offered in the park, with a preference for clustering activities together in the southern portion of the park to make it easier to visit the park as a family.

The top five overall priorities for Topaz Park were:

- Pathway improvements
- Natural play opportunities
- Picnic facilities
- Enhancement and protection of natural areas
- Skateboard/all wheels park

## 3.3 Public Engagement Phase 3 (April 2018)

The final phase of public engagement was used to collect feedback on the final proposed concept plan and the design guidelines that will be used to guide the future park improvements. A key outcome of this phase of engagement was to educate and share information about the various plan elements and to confirm no important considerations had been overlooked.

Overall, approximately 550 residents participated in this phase of engagement through a range of engagement opportunities:

- Online survey
- Open house at Topaz Park
- Presentation to Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Action Group

### **Key Findings:**

- 87% of survey respondents indicated that they were supportive of the proposed improvement plan.
- All design guidelines proposed in this plan received a high level of support (70% or greater).



# Chapter 4

# **Conceptual Plan**

### 4.1 Park Vision Statement

The vision establishes the overall future direction and design for Topaz Park. It is based on input from the public and the City of Victoria's strategic goals:

# **Vision for Topaz Park**

Topaz Park is a destination park for outdoor recreation and sport, offering a wide variety of activity spaces that contribute to the health and wellness of residents of all ages and abilities.

It is an inclusive, flexible gathering place for the community, the region and visitors, to engage in daily active living, to socialize, and to celebrate together at special events.

# 4.2 Guiding Principles

These guiding principles will ensure that the park develops in a manner consistent with the vision statement:

- Accessibility and Inclusion: Well-placed amenities and activities foster access to a variety of opportunities for active living, suited to all ages and abilities.
- **Maximize Multi-Functionality:** Enrich park areas by creating multi-functional spaces that can be adapted to serve multiple types of activities.
- **Two Scales:** Design the park to function at two scales; as a regional destination for sports and special events, and as a neighbourhood park for the local community.
- **Celebrate the Urban Forest:** Enhance and celebrate the role of the urban forest and natural areas in Topaz Park through tree management and natural area protection.
- **Sustainability and Innovation:** *Demonstrate best practices in sustainability through innovative solutions to site design, material selection, and technology.*

## 4.3 Conceptual Diagram

The elements included in the Topaz Park Improvement Plan are based on the results of a fulsome public engagement effort, direction from guiding City documents, financial considerations, and operational needs. The plan responds to these inputs to create a park experience that will meet the needs of our growing community for many years to come.

The concept diagram (Fig. 5) establishes a proposed layout of future park amenities. The exact layout, location, and size of program elements, pathways, and other site elements will only be determined through detailed design, as each area of the park progresses to construction. Design guidelines for each park element in the Section 4.4 will be used to inform these future design exercises.

### Key features of the plan include:

- Enlarging the artificial turf field to increase the overall capacity for field sports;
- Diversifying park uses by adding new types of activities, including a skateboard park, bike skills park, tennis courts, and pickleball courts;
- Improving existing infrastructure, including upgrading the condition of grass sports fields, increasing multi-functionality of the lacrosse box, and improving the playground and leash-optional area;
- Improving park connectivity and accessibility by installing a continuous network of pathways and trails, including marked routes for walking and jogging loops;
- Enhancing natural areas and protecting and increasing tree canopy coverage; and,
- Improving support for special events and festivals, by integrating support infrastructure into park upgrades.





Fig 5: Topaz Park Concept Diagram



### **Illustrative Sketch: Southern Park Enhancement**



A number of new activities are proposed in the southern portion of the park. This sketch represents an artist's interpretation of what this part of the park could look like in the future. This is an illustration only. The exact design and placement of these park areas will be determined through future more detailed design exercises.

- 1 Pickleball Courts
- 4 Bike Skills Park
- Picnic Area

- **2** Tennis Courts
- 6 Outdoor Fitness Area
- 8 Playground

- 3 Skateboard/All-wheels Park
- 6 Sport Hub

**9** Fenced Leash-optional Area

Fig 6: Illustrative Sketch, Southern Park Enhancement

## 4.4 Plan Elements & Design Guidelines



Key Plan

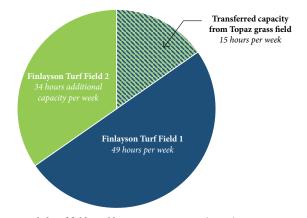
### 4.4.1 Finlayson Artificial Turf Field

The Finlayson artificial turf field is Victoria's most popular playing field, providing reliable year-round play. The existing field surface is at the end of its life and needs to be replaced. Demand for quality sports fields continues to grow, and the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan found that there is demand for upgrading fields to improve capacity and the user experience (City of Victoria, 2017c).

Enlarging the artificial turf field will increase the overall field capacity at Topaz Park by 34 primetime hours per week (soccer). This is because a grass sports field requires resting time between permitted play hours (accommodating an average of 15 hours of play per week), while an artificial turf field can accommodate continuous bookings (accommodating an average of 49 hours per week).

Based on 2017 permits, 100% of soccer teams currently using the Topaz grass field can be accommodated in the expanded turf facility. Incorporating an integrated ball diamond and proper dugouts will also greatly improve the ability of the turf field to serve slo-pitch teams. With scheduling efficiencies, it is possible to accommodate 100% of existing slo-pitch permits from the Topaz grass field in the new artificial turf facility.

The City retained Binnie Consulting to complete a full feasibility study for the proposed facility, including geotechnical, arborist, and lighting reports, and a Class C cost estimate. The schematic design is shown in Fig. 7. The full report is attached as Appendix C.



Expanded turf field: weekly primetime capacity (soccer)

### Design Guidelines: Artificial Turf Field

- Two full-sized soccer field dimensions: 64 x 100m.
- Four small-sided soccer fields overlain on the full-sized soccer field.
- One multi-use ball diamond overlain on the full-size soccer field including a full size backstop and dugouts.
- Off-field goal storage for 4 full size soccer goals and 8 mini soccer goals.
- Covered and rainscreen protected players shelters.
- Spectator grandstand located on the east side of the field, built into the existing slope
- Include adequate ball control fencing to prevent balls from leaving the fields.
- LED sports field lighting system to IES RP-6 Class III standard (min.)
- Protect row of mature black cottonwood trees by installing adjacent root barrier and protecting
  critical root zones during field construction. When these trees reach end-of-life, replace with a large
  canopy park tree species.



Fig. 7: Finlayson artificial turf field xpansion: schematic design







Precedent Images

# Sport Box

Key Plan

### 4.4.2 Sport Box

Improvements to the sport box will increase multi-functional use of this facility for a variety of user groups. Improvements to surfacing, player facilities, and fencing will enhance programming opportunities for casual use and permitted league and tournament play for all ages and abilities. Permitted use of the facility is expected to increase due to the facility improvements and the addition of lighting, which will extend playable hours.

Currently known as the 'Lacrosse Box', the refurbished facility will be rebranded as the 'Sport Box' to make it clear the facility supports a wide range of sport pursuits.







Precedent Images

### **Design Guidelines: Sport Box**

- Provide a new, smooth paved surface.
- Provide new solid perimeter boards.
- Install new chainlink perimeter fencing.
- Explore the potential to add two basketball courts.
- Provide regulation line painting for ball hockey and lacrosse courts.
- Add timed lighting to facilitate evening play.
- Provide lockable storage space.
- Provide improved seating, including players benches and portable bleachers.

Key Plan

### Grass Sports Fields & Sport Hub 4.4.3

Improvements to Glasgow and Blanshard grass sports fields will increase the usability of these fields for field sports and special events. Relocating the Glasgow field backstop and creating an improved spectator zone ("sport hub") will create a more social atmosphere during tournaments, provide a longer outfield, decrease programming conflicts between the ball field and playground, provide enhanced dugout and spectator facilities, and improve circulation between park areas.





Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Grass Sports Fields & Sport Hub

- Upgrade drainage and playing surface on Glasgow and Blanshard grass fields.
- Remove backstop at Glasgow Street edge.
- Provide new backstops, dugouts, and benches for both sports fields.
- Retain a portion of Glasgow field as a 'community field'
- Create a 'sport hub' that provides spectator benches (either built in or space for portable bleachers), player amenities (including power connection and water bottle filling station), and an accessible pathway from the upper park area in the south to the playing fields.

### 4.4.4 Skateboard / All-wheels park



limited access to skateboarding opportunities.

Key Plan

The City of Victoria has an active skateboarding community. The Vic West Youth Park is currently the only City-operated skate park in Victoria. It is heavily used year-round by skateboarders, BMX riders and scooters, and hosts a popular annual skate competition each June. The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan identified the need for a second skate / all-wheels park in the City of Victoria, recognizing through public consultation the demand for a second skills facility (City of Victoria, 2017c).

Skateboard parks have specific siting requirements. The proposed location at Topaz Park offers an ideal location; it offers a large, flat space, is convenient to access from major streets and transit routes, is located far from adjacent residents to limit noise impacts, and serves a quadrant of the City that currently has

Skateboard and all-wheels parks provide a popular activity for all ages. Research shows that youth involved in unstructured and adaptable activities like skateboarding are more likely to continue participating in the sport into adulthood. By comparison, participation in organized and structured sports such as basketball, hockey, and soccer tends to peak around age 10, and drop off considerably after the age of 20 (Toronto, 2016).







Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Skateboard / All-wheels Park

- Offer a suitable riding experience for a variety of wheels, including bikes, skateboards, and scooters.
- Include a beginner's area where people can safely learn, and more advanced areas where beginners can watch more experienced riders.
- Design in collaboration with the local skateboard community to ensure a different type of skating experience than is offered at the Vic West Youth Park.
- Provide timed lighting for evening use.
- Include locker/storage facilities for skate park users and hosts.
- Include shaded seating areas (e.g. through tree planting or shade structure(s))
- Include a water bottle filling station (shared with other adjacent park programs)
- Include clear signage and other types of delineation to outline park rules and flow patterns.

### 4.4.5 Bike Skills Park



The bike skills park will provide an undulating paved pathway with rollers and berms that can be ridden by bikes, skateboards, and scooters. A well-design bike skills park can provide a fun and challenging riding experience for all skill levels, from toddlers to professionals. A key benefit of community bike skills parks is the low barrier to entry. A basic bike and helmet are all that is needed to use the facility, making this form of recreation accessible to a broad socioeconomic spectrum (IMBA, 2014). Research indicates that these types of facilities are especially popular with youth park visitors; a 2013 report published by the Outdoor Industry Association found that bicycling was the most popular outdoor activity for youth participants; 27% of Americans between the ages of 6 and 17 engaged in some form of cycling (road, mountain, BMX) (IMBA, 2014).

The City of Victoria has committed to becoming a national leader in cycling infrastructure (City of Victoria, 2015). The bike skills park at Topaz Park will help support the growth of community cycling by promoting cycling as an active lifestyle choice, by creating a social hub for an all-ages cycling community, and by providing skills development to inspire the confidence needed to ride on street.







Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Bike Skills Park

- Incorporate existing trees where possible and protect tree roots.
- Selectively prune, remove, and/or replant vegetation to provide a safe cycling experience with clear sightlines.
- · Serve a variety of skill levels, with low-risk, low-skill areas that are suitable for beginners and small children, and enough challenge for skilled riders to hone their skills.
- Provide a clear and progressive level of difficulty, with skills levels made apparent using signs or visual cues.
- · Offer a suitable riding experience for a variety of wheels, including bikes, skateboards, and scooters.
- Provide a bike repair station.
- Provide perimeter seating at key viewpoints.

# Tennis & Prickleds Courts Key Plan

### 4.4.6 Tennis & Pickleball Courts

Tennis was previously a popular amenity at Topaz Park. Community feedback indicated that new tennis courts would be well-utilized and should be reintroduced to the park. There are eight existing tennis court facilities in Victoria (23 courts total), used for permitted use, drop-in use, sport camp, and youth programs. While this supply of tennis courts is consistent with other similar-sized municipalities, feedback from tennis users indicate that the existing inventory does not meet current demand.

Pickleball is a court sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong. It is currently one of the fastest growing sports in North America. The smaller court size, easy rules, and varying levels of competition make it popular with a wide age range. There is currently a growing demand for

pickleball facilities throughout the Capital Regional District. A total of 25 courts are available across Victoria, Saanich, Esquimalt and Oak Bay. The majority of these (21 courts) are shared court space with existing tennis courts or are located on converted tennis courts. There are 5 purpose built courts across the region (1 in Victoria, 4 in Saanich).

The plan proposes a large court facility to accommodate dedicated space for both pickleball and tennis courts. Round-robin style tournaments are popular in pickleball, ideally requiring 8-12 courts; the combined court facility will allow the tennis courts to be temporarily converted to additional pickleball court space when the full facility is permitted for a pickleball tournament.







Precedent Images

### **Design Guidelines: Court Sports**

- Provide two full-size tennis courts.
- Provide 6 purpose-built pickleball courts.
- Provide 4' high chainlink fencing between beach pickleball court.
- Provide timed lighting for evening play.
- Provide chainlink fencing around the perimeter of the court sport area.
- Provide bench seating for players and spectators.
- Provide an accessible pathway to the parking lot and public washroom facility.
- Provide a water bottle filling station (to be shared with other adjacent programs).

# Outdoor

Key Plan

### 4.4.7 Outdoor Fitness Area

Outdoor fitness areas promote an active lifestyle by offering a variety of training equipment pieces that are easily accessible and free to use. An improved fitness area for Topaz Park will be located in a more central location, in close proximity to other active park programs such as the tennis and pickleball courts, skateboard park, and bike skills park. The new location is also located along marked walking/jogging circuits, which will make it easier to include the outdoor fitness area as part of circuit training activities.

Feedback from community consultation indicated that new types of equipment should be added that support "functional" or bodyweight training; adding additional static pieces such as horizontal bars, monkey bars, and parallel bars support the growing interest in cross-fit style training and provide greater adaptability of the equipment to suit multiple types of workouts.







Precedent Images

### **Design Guidelines: Outdoor Fitness Area**

- Design the fitness area with rubber (or similar) surfacing to improve accessibility and accommodate a range of exercise types.
- Provide equipment suitable for a range of ages and abilities.
- Include a mix of equipment types, with some static pieces and some kinetic pieces.
- Include a water bottle filling station (to be shared with other adjacent programs).

### 4.4.8 Playground & Picnic Area

Playground

Kev Plan

The playground at Topaz Park works well in its existing location, and is very popular with the local community. In the future, this playground will be upgraded with natural play opportunities in response to community feedback.

The picnic area at Topaz Park will offer an improved space for community gathering and celebrating. Its central location between the nearby bike skills park, skateboard park, racquet courts and playground will make it an ideal central gathering place for families visiting the park.

Providing a variety of spaces for socializing and group gatherings in parks is a direction included in both the City's Official Community Plan (2012) and Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (2017c). The community desire for this type of

amenity in Topaz Park was confirmed during public engagement, when incorporation of a picnic area ranked third in overall priorities for future improvements.



Precedent Images

### **Design Guidelines: Playground**

- Provide updated play equipment with an expanded footprint that appeals to children aged 2-12.
- Provide a mix of natural and traditional play opportunities.
- Incorporate play opportunities for a range of ages and abilities, including universally accessible play features.
- Consult the community during the planning and design process for the playground.

### Design Guidelines: Picnic Area

- Provide universal accessibility to a variety of picnic facilities.
- Create a space conducive to a range of types and sizes of gatherings (e.g. birthday celebrations, family dinner, special events).
- Consider inclusion of a covered picnic area for weather protection.
- Enhance the natural beauty of the picnic area with planting areas/gardens. Consider native and/or edible plants in addition to canopy shade trees.

# Shared Leashoptional Area

### 4.4.9 Leash-Optional Areas

Topaz Park offers the only dedicated leash-optional space in Hillside Quadra. Feedback from community consultation indicated that both of the leash-optional areas at Topaz Park are currently well-utilized, and that investment should be made in the full-time leash-optional area to increase its functionality. Future improvements to the full-time leash-optional area include full perimeter fencing, better site amenities, and increasing the available flat area. These improvements are anticipated to make the leash-optional area a popular neighbourhood gathering space for local dogs and their owners.

Key Plan













Precedent Images

### **Design Guidelines: Leash-Optional Areas**

- Retain existing time limited shared use of a portion of Glasgow (community) field.
- Install a perimeter chainlink fence around primary leash-optional area.
- Install a minimum of one double-gated entry point. Locate entry(s) away from playground to minimize conflicts between dogs and children.
- Regrade a portion of this sloping site to ensure a large, flat area for dog exercising and play; provide accessible pathway access from the entrance through the flat area.
- Retain and protect mature trees.
- Selectively remove underbrush as required to facilitate fence installation and improve sightlines; retain some underbrush areas on the upper hill as a dog play feature.
- Include benches for seating.
- Include a dog water station and dog bag dispenser.

### 4.4.10 Walkways and Cycling Paths

A well-connected system of walking paths will make it easier to travel within the park, and provide an affordable and effective way to increase fitness and physical activity (see Fig. 8). Recent research has found that the presence of walking and jogging loops increases park use by up to 80%, and the level of physical activity in a park by up to 90% (Cohen 2017). This is especially true of seniors; the level of physical activity by seniors doubles in parks with walking loops (City Parks Alliance 2017). The importance of an improved network of walking and jogging paths at Topaz Park was reiterated in public consultation; pathway improvements were the number one community priority for future improvements. Pathways also emerged as the most appreciated park amenity through public engagement conducted in 2016 for the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan.

At just over 25 acres, Topaz Park is large enough to accommodate distance marked walking and jogging circuits to meet a range of fitness goals for local residents. Continuous 1 kilometer and 1.5 kilometer circuits will include a mix of pathway surfaces. A 1 kilometer fully paved circuit will make it possible to complete a circuit for those who have difficulty navigating softer pathway surfacing (e.g. strollers or wheelchairs). (See Fig. 9)

The City of Victoria's Greenways Plan (2013) identifies a greenway connection through Topaz Park, connecting Glasgow Street to Finlayson Avenue. On-street and pathway improvements are proposed to accommodate this cycling connection, and will make cycling through the park easier and safer.

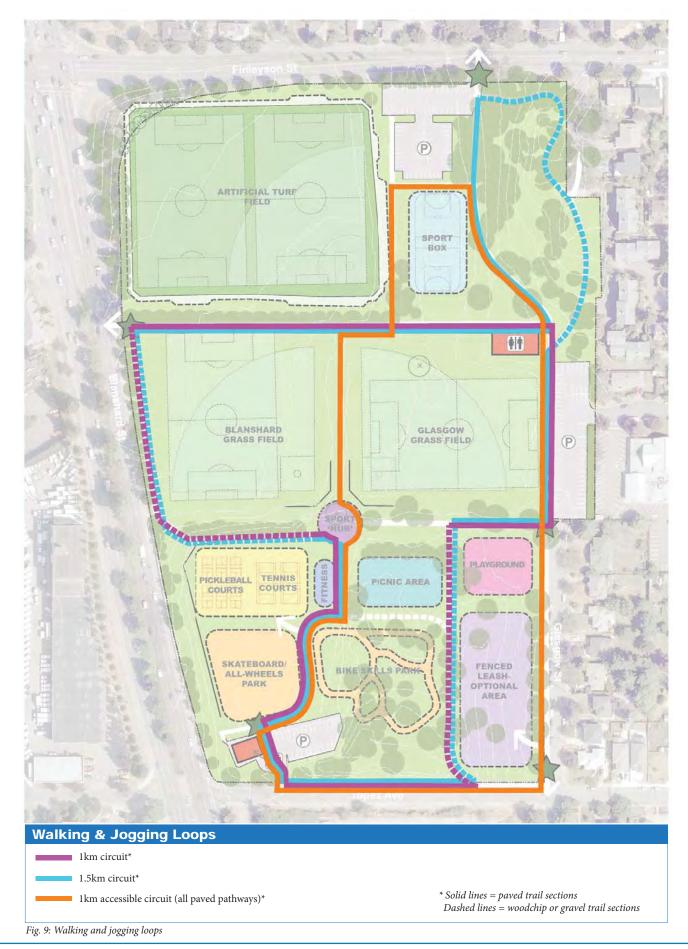


Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Walking & Cycling Paths

- Provide a mix hard (paved) and soft (woodchip or gravel) pathway surfacing to meet a range of accessibility needs.
- Provide pathway lighting to create safe walking connections across the park and to key destinations at night.
- Provide distance-marked walking/jogging loops around and throughout the park.
- Provide a greenway bicycle connection through the park connecting Glasgow Street to Finlayson Avenue.





Key Plan

### 4.4.11 Entries and Wayfinding

A key finding from public consultation was that many residents don't utilize or are unaware of the full extents of Topaz Park. Improved major entry points and cohesive and clear wayfinding signage will improve park accessibility and use by making it easier to know what different recreational opportunities are offered within the park and how to move between them. Park signage can also be used to identify unique park features, such as sensitive ecosystems, walking/jogging loops, and interpretive information.

Investment in high quality park signage offers a high return on investment. Recent research released from the US National Study of Neighbourhood Parks found that investments in clear wayfinding and informational signage in parks is one of the most effective ways to increase park visits; better signage is correlated with a 62% increase in park activity (City Parks Alliance 2017).





Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Signage & Wayfinding

- Design park entries to provide a clear sense of arrival at Topaz Park.
- Wherever possible, provide universal accessibility to the internal parkway system at park entries.
- Install park signage to clearly identify the location of programs and activities available at Topaz Park.
- Provide clear wayfinding signage throughout Topaz Park.

# Fine year Parking Lot Glasgow Parking Lot

### 4.4.12 Parking

The City retained Urban Systems Inc. to investigate the potential parking impacts of the proposed new uses at Topaz Park, using multiple on-site assessments, precedent studies, and recommended parking supply levels from the ITE Parking Generation Guide.

The full parking study is attached as Appendix B. Overall, the parking study found that there is sufficient parking on-site to support the proposed expansion of recreational facilities, and that the amount of on-site parking spaces meets recommended targets for a 25 acre multi-use park.

The study found that overall peak parking demand in the proposed plan is similar to the existing uses. Given that the proposed concept plan will result in a greater

variety of park uses and activities, it is likely that average parking demand will increase as a variety of user groups look to access new park facilities. The current parking supply is anticipated to meet this increase in average parking demand.

The study did not find a parking shortage during the observed special event (Bill Drew Memorial SoccerFest). While the on-site parking lots were mostly full, there was plenty of unrestricted on-street parking available throughout the day, especially along Topaz Avenue. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some other events throughout the year experience parking shortages. While parking supply may be exceeded by demand during a very small number of major events each year, it is best practice to base parking requirements on the average parking demand that will be experienced throughout the year.

The baseline accessibility assessment (Appendix D) found that improvements can be made to the accessible parking spaces in Topaz parking lot and Finlayson parking lot to provide better access for park visitors with disabilities.

Improvements to the parking lots are planned to make it easier to arrive at and leave Topaz Park during peak times, to improve accessibility, and to encourage alternate modes of transportation. Improvements in park signage and pathways are also anticipated to make it easier to travel between park amenities and parking areas.

### **Design Guidelines: Parking**

- Improve entry/exit conditions at Finlayson parking lot.
- Explore opportunities to establish shared parking agreements with nearby landowners and institutions to provide overflow parking space during major events.
- Create a space near one of the entrances of Topaz Park to allow people attending major events to be easily picked up/dropped off.
- Encourage more park users to walk, bike, and take transit, especially during special events.
- Ensure a high level of transit access to Topaz Park by optimizing transit route connections and the location of bus stops.
- Provide bike racks at park entrances and adjacent to key park destinations.
- Adapt the accessible parking stalls in Topaz and Finlayson parking lots to improve accessible parking options.

# Main washroom building

Key Plan

### 4.4.13 Park Buildings

The plan retains both washroom buildings in their current locations. Short-term improvements include improving washroom amenities and animating building exteriors with mural painting.

The baseline accessibility assessment (Appendix D) found that improvements are needed to the interior layouts of both washroom buildings to allow for increased access and more intuitive use. Interior upgrades may also be needed to adapt the interior of the buildings to changing park needs. These interior renovations will be assessed as part of a planned City-wide assessment of all public washrooms in parks to determine cost, phasing, and feasibility.





Precedent Images

### **Design Guidelines: Park Buildings**

- Incorporate additional amenities into existing washroom buildings, including soap, paper towels, and baby changing stations.
- Explore opportunities for increasing the presence of washroom buildings by animating building facades with mural painting.
- Improve and promote accessibility and inclusion, including making the washroom buildings more family-friendly and altering interior layouts to increase access.
- Analyze options for renovations to both washroom buildings (e.g. by reconfiguring internal layout) as part of larger planned City-wide assessment of public washrooms in parks.

### 4.4.14 Trees & Natural Areas

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (2017c) found that environment features, natural areas, and ecosystems within the City's parks and open spaces are highly valued by Victoria residents. Preserving and improving environmental features and benefits throughout the park system emerged as the highest overall priority for Victoria's parks through multiple engagement methods. This was reiterated through community consultation for this project, when preserving and enhancing trees and natural areas ranked fourth in overall priorities.

The urban forest plays a vital role at Topaz Park by providing shade, beauty, character, and habitat. The park contains a healthy tree canopy, including several large canopy tree species and a significant remnant Garry oak ecosystem. The plan locates future park activities to preserve existing trees wherever possible, and provides the opportunity to expand canopy coverage in the park over time (see. Fig. 10). Protection and management of natural areas will improve biodiversity and ensure that park activities and natural areas are mutually beneficial.







Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Trees & Natural Areas

- Plant new trees in locations that provide canopy coverage, shade, definition, and character to new park areas.
- Where planting areas are included through detailed design, consider native plants, edible plants, or plants that offer wildlife habitat value.
- Retain, protect, and enhance the environmentally sensitive Garry oak woodland ecosystem in the northeast corner of the park.
- Where trees need to be removed due to poor health or to facilitate construction, plant replacement trees to ensure no net loss of canopy coverage, with a preference for planting large canopy park tree species.
- Ensure long-lived, healthy park trees by providing sufficient soil volumes, root barrier, and irrigation where appropriate.
- Selectively remove underbrush in the southeast section of the park to facilitate new park activities, sightlines, and safety.



Fig. 10: Trees and natural areas

### 4.4.15 Event Infrastructure

As one of the largest parks in the City of Victoria, Topaz Park is a popular outdoor special event venue, hosting a range of festivals, sports tournaments, and other events each year.

Integrating support infrastructure such as power and water connections will make it easier and more affordable to host special events in the park and will support the continued use and potential growth of Topaz Park as a special event venue (see Fig. 11). Incorporating infrastructure for special events supports key goals in both the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan and Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan (2017a,c).









Precedent Images

### Design Guidelines: Event Infrastructure

- Design an internal park pathway loop to provide periodic one-way vehicular access for special events and food trucks.
- Provide electrical connections for special events at the grass sports fields, sport hub, artificial turf field, picnic area, washroom buildings, and sport box.
- Provide potable water connections at the sport hub and both washroom buildings.



Fig. 11: Event infrastructure



# Chapter 5

# **Implementation**

## 5.1 Funding

Implementation of this plan will rely on a variety of internal and external funding sources.

### 5.1.1 Internal Funding Sources

Internal funding requests will be brought to Council for consideration as part of the annual Financial Plan process, and will consider a number of internal funding mechanisms including core funding (municipal property taxes) and available reserve funds.

### 5.1.2 External Funding Sources

A variety of external funding sources will be explored to implement this plan, including:

- **Grant Opportunities:** Some external funding is possible through provincial and federal government investment and other external grant opportunities. Potential grant opportunities will be actively pursued. Potential grant funding sources will be reported on as part of the City's quarterly updates.
- **Public Agency Joint Ventures:** Cooperative ventures between the City and other organizations and institutions can leverage limited funding to meet mutual mandates and interests. Partnerships could include joint funding of amenities or programs, potentially reducing capital and operating costs.
- **Community Organizations:** Groups who have particular interest in some of the recommended capital projects may be effective at fundraising. These groups also often have access to grants and funding sources that are not available to municipal governments.
- **Private Sector Partnerships:** Contracts and partnerships with private business can provide a variety of revenue streams. Topaz Park currently collects permit revenue from field booking permits and special event permits. Future services that could complement Topaz Park and generate additional revenue in the form of rental or permit fees include food trucks, fitness programs, and other training programs and camps. Private endeavors would need to complement and enhance the overall park experience, comply with all relevant City regulations, and not overly inhibit use of the park by residents.

# 5.2 Plan Phasing

The improvement plan for Topaz Park is an ambitious vision to deliver expanded and improved recreational facilities that will better meet the needs of our growing community. This plan will be implemented across multiple phases. The proposed phasing considers replacement timelines for existing amenities, linkages between projects, construction efficiencies, required project timelines, priorities from public consultation, and financial impacts. Relative cost impacts are estimated based on the current construction market, and are intended to be used for preliminary project budgeting. More detailed cost estimates for each project will be prepared through preliminary and detailed design exercises to guide future funding requests. See Fig. 10 and Table 2.

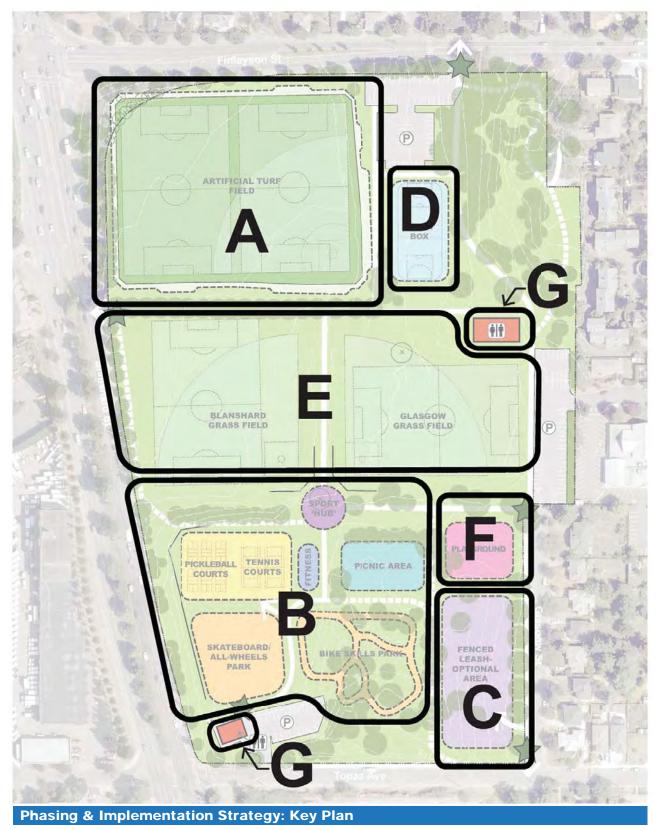


Fig. 10: Phasing and implementation strategy: key plan

# Phasing and Implementation Strategy

Short Term	n Actions (1-2 years)	Estimated Cost					
Map Key	Project	Scope	Rationale	Time required to complete project	Low (< \$500,000)	Medium (\$500,000 - \$1M)	High (>\$1,000,000)
A	Artificial turf field replacement	Pesign and Construction:  Synthetic turf field Field lighting Player benches and bleachers	Must be done in advance of repurposing Topaz grass field to retain field capacity.  Carpet is at end of life and requires replacement within 3 years.	14 months	(19500),000)	(\$300)000 \$2.11)	•
В	Southern park enhancement (Design Phase)	Consultation and Design:  • Skateboard park  • Bike skills park  Design:  • Tennis/pickleball courts  • Outdoor fitness area  • Picnic area  • Sport hub/infields  • Associated amenities (pathways, lighting, seating, entries etc.)	Detailed design of new park amenities is required to generate an accurate construction cost estimate.  Completing the detailed design of the southern park area as one project will result in a more cohesive design.	12 months	•		
iviedium 1	erm Actions (3-6 years)			Time required to	Low	Estimated Cost Medium	High
Map Key	Project	Scope	Rationale	complete project	(< \$500,000)	(\$500,000 - \$1M)	(>\$1,000,000)
В	Southern park enhancement (Construction Phase)	Construction:  Tennis/pickleball courts  Skateboard park  Bike skills park  Outdoor fitness area  Picnic area  Sport hub/infields	Construction of new park amenities can proceed after artificial turf field expansion is completed.  Constructing adjacent elements as one project will result in a more cohesive design and offer construction cost efficiencies.	12 months			•
С	Leash-Optional area	Design and construction:  Perimeter fencing  Regrading and resurfacing  Site amenities (seating, water fountain)  Topaz @ Glasgow park entry	This is a discrete project that can be completed in advance of other site improvements, as funding becomes available.	10 months	•		
D	Sport box replacement	Design and Construction:  • Surfacing and boards  • Lighting  • Storage  • Seating	Facilities are nearing end of life.	12 months	•		
E	Grass field drainage/surfacing repair (cost per field)	Repair: • Drainage, surface, infields, irrigation	Design of sport hub and spectator areas is required prior to repairing field condition.	6 months		•	
N/A	Pathway improvements	Design and Construction:  • Any pathway upgrades not already completed as part of another project  • Improvements to parking lots	Pathway upgrades must typically be installed as part of or after adjacent facility improvements (e.g. field drainage must be repaired before cross-park pathways can be installed).  Pathway improvements should be included as part of other facility upgrades where feasible.	N/A	•		
N/A	Park signage and wayfinding	Design and Construction:  Park wayfinding signage Park ID signage (where not already completed as part of another project)	Construction of new park amenities must be completed before accurate park maps and wayfinding signage can be installed.	N/A	•		
Long Term	Actions (7-10 years)			Time required to	Low	Estimated Cost Medium	High
Map Key	Project	Scope	Rationale	complete project	(< \$500,000)	(\$500,000 - \$1M)	(>\$1,000,000)
F	Playground replacement	Consultation, Design and Construction:  Playground upgrade  Improved playground park entry	<ul> <li>Playground to be upgraded in accordance with City of Victoria's playground upgrade program.</li> </ul>	12 months	•		
Operational Map Key	al Items (to be completed as part of ongo Project	ing City operations) Scope	Rationale				
N/A G	Tree planting  Park washroom upgrades	Repair:  • Washroom amenities  • Exterior murals	Tree planting locations to be confirmed as part of other park upgrades Washroom amenity upgrades to be determined as part of City-wide assessment of public washrooms in parks.  Exterior murals to be completed at any time as funding allows or building require repainting.				
T-1.1. 2	DI I II I I I I						

Table 2: Phasing and Implementation Strategy

# 5.3 Operational Impacts

The improvement plan for Topaz Park includes a significant change in the types of amenities offered in the park. Adjustments to the cost of ongoing park operations and maintenance over time will be included in future Financial Plans for consideration.

# 5.4 Measuring Success: Monitoring and Review

The City of Victoria Parks Division will be responsible for ongoing implementation and tracking of this plan. Progress reports will be incorporated into annual reporting on the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan. This plan should be reviewed during the five year review of the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan to ensure that it continues to be relevant and reflective of the needs of the City of Victoria parks system.

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# **Emergency Shelter Spaces in Victoria**

Shelter	Provider	Bed space	Current approximate availability
919 Pandora	Our Place Society	54	0-2 available nightly from the waitlist
My Place	Our Place Society	61	8 spots open monthly
Rock Bay Landing	Cool Aid	84	5-15 per night for 3 Cool-Aid Shelters
Sandi Merriman House	Cool Aid	25	See above re Cool Aid Shelters  Accessible only to those who identify as women
Next steps	Cool Aid	13	See above re Cool Aid shelters
Arbutus	Portland Housing Society	55	12-20 opening Includes both co-ed and women-only spaces
St. John the Divine	Solid	30	10 per night
Salvation Army	Salvation Army	21	Accessible to men only
Out of the rain youth shelter	Beacon	15	5 vacancies per night Accessible only to youth aged 15 to 25
Kiwanis youth shelter	KEYS	10	Accessible only to youth aged 13 - 18

Shelter	Provider	Bed space	Current approximate availability	
Greater Victoria Women's Transition House Emergency Shelter	GVWTH	18	Presently full  Women must transition out after 30 days due to demand  Accessible only to women and children fleeing violence	
Cridge Centre Emergency Shelter for Women and Children	Cridge Centre	18	Presently full  Women are supposed to transition out after 30 days but they are permitted to stay longer  Accessible only to women and children	

# **Transitional Housing Units in Victoria**

Housing	Provider	Bed space	Current Availability
919 Pandora (top 3 floors)	Our Place Society	45	0-2 vacancies per month
940 Caledonia	Our Place	30	1 vacancy per month
Muncey Place	Our Place Society & Cool Aid	151 total (121 OPS, 30 Cool Aid)	1-2 vacancies per month
Capital City Centre	Our Place Society	89	No vacancies due to building closure

Housing	Provider	Bed space	Current Availability
2933 Albina	Our Place Society	52	5 vacancies in past 8 months  Permanent supportive housing building
Salvation Army	Salvation Army	102	Presently full Accessible to men only
Mirrors	Beacon youth services	48	5 vacancies annually Accessibly only to youth aged 19 to 27
Spaken House	Aboriginal Coalition to end homelessness	22	No vacancies at present  Accessible only to people who identify as Indigenous women
House of courage	Aboriginal Coalition to end homelessness	44	No vacancies at present  Vacancies typically arises every 3 – 4  months
Camas Gardens	Pacifica Housing	44	For all Pacifica Housing in the region:  13 units of Independent Living 4 in Supportive Housing.  There are more under renovation not yet ready to occupy.
Medewiwin	Pacifica Housing	26	For all Pacifica Housing in the region:  13 units of Independent Living

Housing	Provider	Bed space	Current Availability
			4 in Supportive Housing.
			There are more under renovation not yet ready to occupy.
Waterview	Pacifica Housing	49	For all Pacifica Housing in the region:
			13 units of Independent Living
			4 in Supportive Housing.
			There are more under renovation not yet ready to occupy.
Johnson	Portland Housing	100	5-10 per year
Douglas St 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Portland Housing	25	1 per year
Juniper	Portland Housing	45	1 per year
The soleil	Portland Housing	74	5-6 per year
Tally Ho	Cool Aid	54	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Mike Gidora	Cool Aid	45	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Pandora apartments	Cool Aid	32	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
The Lily	Cool Aid	56	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5%

Housing	Provider	Bed space	Current Availability
			vacancy rate
Swift House	Cool Aid	50	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
210 Gorge	Cool Aid	21	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Desmond House	Cool Aid	27	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Johnson manor	Cool Aid	20	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Rock Bay Landing Transitional	Cool Aid	23	For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Pandora Youth Apartments	Cool Aid	8	Accessible to youth only
			For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Hillside Terrace	Cool Aid	45	Accessible to seniors only
			For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate
Mount Edwards Court	Cool Aid	78	Accessible to seniors only
			For all Cool Aid locations, there is a 5% vacancy rate

Housing	Provider	Bed space	Current Availability
Greater Victoria Women's Transition House Second Stage Housing	GVWTH		None at present  Accessible to women and children only
Cridge Centre for Families fleeing violence	Cridge Centre	35	None at present  Accessible to women and children only

# PARK OVERVIEWS

#### Introduction

This appendix contains information about 55 Victoria parks<sup>1</sup> where potential overnight sheltering is considered to be practically feasible.

Information on each park includes potential sheltering capacity of that park. That number has been established in accordance with the methodology set out below. It is important to note, however, that it is a conservative estimate of sheltering capacity only. The actual sheltering capacity realized at each location may vary depending on how shelters are set up relative to each other and immediate environmental conditions present at any given time. Furthermore, no adjustments have been made for individual preferences of the users of the temporary overnight shelters: some individuals may choose to shelter in locations that were deemed impractical and, therefore, excluded from the count.

#### Methodology

The City maintains as part of its ordinary operations a geographic information system (VicMap) which contains geographic data about lands in Victoria, including its parks system. In addition to basic land survey information, VicMap also includes topographical information, and information about existing municipal infrastructure as well as trees and other vegetation within the park system.

Using data contained in VicMap, each of the parks was evaluated to determine its potential sheltering capacity by applying legal restrictions as well as practical barriers.

#### Legal restrictions

The *Parks Regulation Bylaw* contains a number of specific regulations that limit where in a park a temporary overnight shelter may be erected:

16A ...

- (2) A homeless person must not place, secure, erect, use, or maintain in place, in a park, a structure, improvement or overhead shelter, including a tent, lean-to, or other form of overhead shelter constructed from a tarpaulin, plastic, cardboard or other rigid or non-rigid material:
  - (b) at any time, in

...

- (i) a playground, sports field, footpath or road within a park,
- (ii) an environmentally or culturally sensitive area, community garden, or horticultural area,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Beacon Hill Park was excluded from this analysis due to restrictions under the terms of the trust.

(iii) any area within a park that has been designated for an event or activity under (A) a valid and subsisting permit issued under the authority of this Bylaw, or (B) a lease, licence, or other agreement authorized by Council,

•••

(c) at any time within 4 metres of a private property line,

...

- (3) Notwithstanding subsection (2), person must not place, erect, maintain or use a shelter in a park at any time
  - (a) within 8 metres of a playground,
  - (b) within 4 metres of any area listed in section 16A(2)(b),
  - (c) within 4 metres of any other shelter that is placed, erected, maintained or used in accordance with section 16A or this section,
  - (d) within 50 metres of a school as defined in the School Act, or
  - (e) that, including all associated objects or possessions, occupies more than 9 square metres in size.

These restrictions were superimposed over the map of each park to identify areas where sheltering is legally prohibited. The only modification, in accordance with the recommendations in the report, was to increase the area around playgrounds (s. 16A(3)(a)) from 8 metres to 15 metres.

#### Practical barriers

In addition to the parameters explicitly set out in City bylaws, staff also considered practical and topographical barriers to sheltering, such as sloped terrain, densely treed areas, which would make a site unsuitable or undesirable for sheltering purposes (ie areas which are directly adjacent to a baseball dugout or bleachers).

A 5% slope, equivalent to accessible ramp standard, was used as an upper limit of a slope considered potentially suitable for sheltering notwithstanding that it is possible to erect shelter on greater slopes than that.

### Potential Sheltering Capacity

Once the areas covered by either legal restrictions or practical barriers where removed, that left the areas which are potentially available for temporary overnight sheltering. Applying the maximum sheltering site size from the bylaw (nine square metres for each shelter – s. 19A(3)(e)) as well as the required separation between shelters (four metres – s. 16A(3)(c)), staff were then able to generate the potential sheltering capacity for each park. Parks with no potential sheltering capacity were not included in this appendix.

### Map legend

Each park overview sheet includes an arial view of the park showing the application of the above methodology to that park, using the following symbols:



# **Alexander Park**

**Address:** 1325, 1345, 1355, 1365, 1375 Bay Street & 1330, 1340, 1350, 1360, 1370, 1380 Walnut Street & 2422, 2426 Oregon Avenue

Neighbourhood: Fernwood

**PID:** 009-078-169, 009-078-321, 009-078-347, 009-078-177, 009-078-355, 009-078-193, 009-078-363, 009-078-207, 009-078-240, 009-078-231, 009-078-371, 009-078-258, 009-078-282

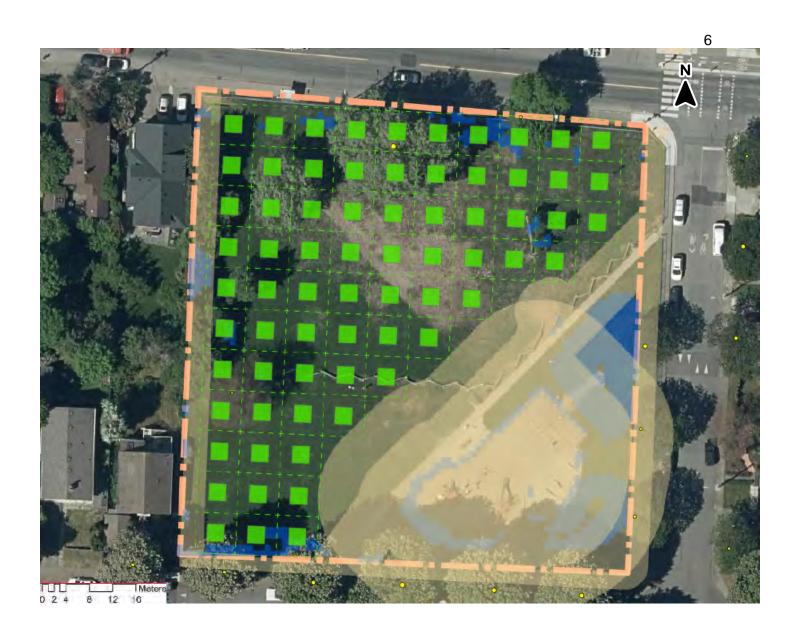


### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Pathway.
- Benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage cans.
- Mostly fenced.
- Leash optional area.

### Notes:

- Land acquired via tax sales and purchases from private owners.
- Subject to Miscellaneous Parks Reservation Bylaw No. 80-04.



# **Alston Green**

Address: 190 Bay Street

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

PID: 000-608-629

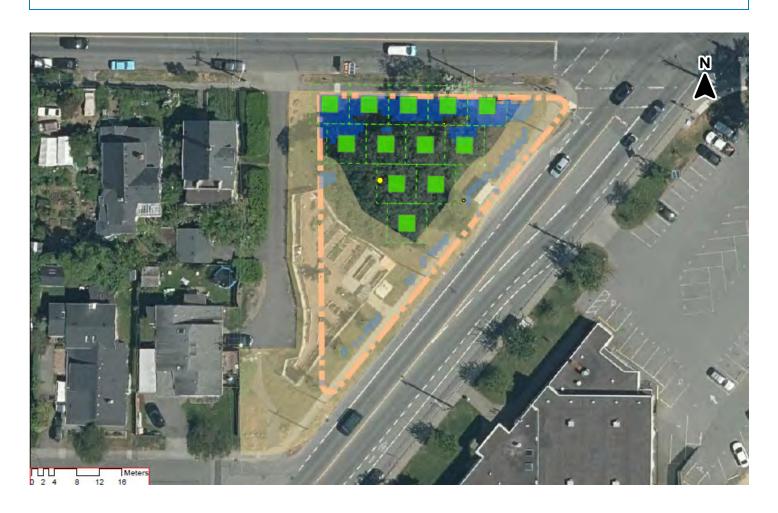


### Improvements/facilities:

Community garden.

#### **Notes:**

- Sidewalk along Wilson Street & Bay Street frontages.
- The City acquired the land from BC in 2003, subject to Covenant EV073018 restricting usage for park purposes.



# **Arbutus Park**

Address: 2925 Washington Avenue

Neighbourhood: Burnside

**PID:** 009-308-261



### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage can and dog bag dispenser.
- Meadow area and naturalized plantings.
- Leash optional.

#### **Notes:**

- Land acquired via tax sale proceedings in 1936 and subject to *Park Reservation (Washington Avenue) By-law*, No. 78-205.
- Provides water access to Gorge Waterway.
- Anticipated site disruption 2026-2028 related to BC Hydro cable replacement project.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(iv).



# **Banfield Park**

**Address:** 521 Craigflower Road

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 004-479-688, 008-035-580, 008-035-491, 000-540-463, 008-035-601, 007-765-045, 006-251-153, 000-540-129



### Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple benches and picnic tables. Multiple garbage cans and dog bag dispensers.
- Community garden and community orchard. Various horticulture beds (shrubs hedges).
- Playground. 2 tennis courts and a sport court. Associated fencing.
- Stairs and multiple park paths, including multiuse bike path.
- Swim dock (expanded summer 2024) and water access.
- Community Centre.
- Parking areas.
- Leash optional area.

#### **Notes:**

- Banfield Park By-law, 1951, No. 3701
- Banfield Park Addition By-law, 1953, No. 3939
- Banfield Park Reservation By-law, 1960, No. 5044
- Banfield Park, Lot 'E', Plan 1225, Reservation By-law, 1964, No. 5523
- Banfield Park Dedication By-law, 1977, No. 7166
- Park Reservation (Banfield Park Addition) By-law, No. 78-226
- Adjacent Gorge Marine Park.
- Existing greenway runs through park and multiuse bike path (connection to Galloping Goose and Selkirk Trestle).
- VicWest Community Centre located in park.
- Multiple community events held in park such as VicWest Fest and Wonderment.
- Community centre programming via Victoria West Community Association and includes childcare.
- Anticipated site disruption 2025-2028 related to BC Hydro cable replacement project.



# **Barnard Park**

**Address:** 300 Barnard Avenue, 700, 710 & 716 Sea Terrace & 749, 751 Esquimalt Road

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 005-979-064, 009-420-479, 009-140-701, 009-140-735, 009-140-697, 009-140-671

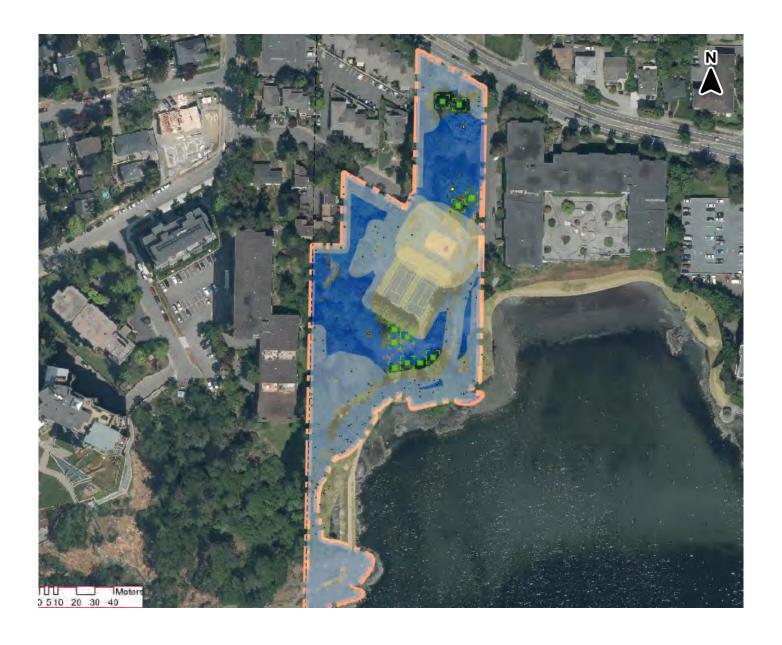
### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Tennis/pickleball courts (fenced).
- Multiple benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Horticultural shrubs and mixed bed.
- Various pathways and stairs.
- Leash optional area.



- Lands purchased from Canada in 1978.
- Park Reservation (Barnard Park) Bylaw No. 78-174 applies to all 6 parcels.
- Existing greenway follows West Song Walkway at water edge of park.





# **Begbie Green**

**Address:** 1665, 1675 Pembroke Street & 2020, 2021, 2023 Shelbourne Street

Neighbourhood: Jubilee

**PID:** 007-793-031, 001-281-526, 007-793-171, 007-797-265, 007-793-138, 027-293-

076, 027-293-092



### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Pathways.
- Fencing.
- Garbage can.

#### **Notes:**

- Portions surrounded by road.
- Restrictive Covenants on some lots regarding no buildings etc.



# **Begbie Parkway**

**Address:** 1401 Begbie Street & 1425 Harrison Street

**Neighbourhood:** Fernwood

**PID:** 002-696-746, 003-458-792



### Improvements/facilities:

- Horticulture-mixed bed area.
- Sidewalk bisects larger section.

### Notes:

Portion surrounded by roads.



# **Blackwood Green**

Address: 2550 Cook Street

Neighbourhood: Hillside Quadra

**PID:** 000-223-271

### Improvements/facilities:

Playground.

• Picnic table and benches.

• Garbage can.

• Partially fenced.

• Horticulture areas - rose bed and hedging.



#### Notes:

- Land acquired via tax sales and subject to Park Reservation (Blackwood Green) By-law, No. 79-129.
- Blackwood Street bisects park into north and south portion.





# **Bushby Park**

Address: 160 Bushby Street

Neighbourhood: Fairfield

**PID:** 005-481-091

### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Picnic table and benches.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Drinking fountain.

#### Notes:

Land acquired via tax sale, with a portion purchased for general purposes.



# Cecelia Ravine Park

**Address:** 445, 449, 455, 465, 475 Burnside Road East & 416, 430, 431, 434, 435, 440, 450, 461, 471, 475 Cecelia Road & 3119 Washington Avenue

Neighbourhood: Burnside

**PID:** 000-179-558, 023-381-540, 008-118-230, 009-307-389, 008-118-256, 009-307-397, 006-424-678, 006-425-364, 009-743-405, 006-424-201, 009-307-443, 006-424-295, 009-307-991, 006-424-121, 009-308-032, 023-381-558, 009-308-075, 009-928-826



### Improvements/facilities:

- Burnside Gorge Community Centre.
- Playground.
- Community Garden.
- Bike park.
- Sport court.
- Exercise equipment.
- Parking areas.
- Garbage cans.
- Multiple benches and picnic tables.
- Multiple pathways, stairs, retaining walls, railing and fencing.
- Horticulture shrubs beds, rain garden, and wetland.
- Green stormwater infrastructure including green roof, raingarden and wetland.
- Drinking fountains.
- · Washroom.
- Public Art Topography.

#### **Notes:**

- Cecelia Ravine Park Reservation Bylaw 1978, No. 78-23
- Cecelia Park Reservation Partial Removal Bylaw, No. 83-185
- Cecelia Park Reservation Cancellation Bylaw, No. 94-55 (cancels the park dedication over a portion of the lands that is described in Bylaw No. 78-23)
- Park Reservation (Cecelia Ravine) Bylaw, No. 96-51
- Cecelia Park Improvement Plan was created in 2018; implementation of plan has occurred in last seven years.
- Burnside Gorge Community Centre located in park.

- Community centre programming via Burnside Gorge Community Association and includes childcare.
- Park is bisected N-S by the Galloping Goose Regional Trail which is also a portion of the TransCanada Trail.
- Cecelia Road Greenway runs E-W through site.
- Riparian area underwent significant restoration in 2024.
- Community participation in the City's Natural Areas Volunteer Program in the park.
- Sheltering is restricted as per Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(vii).



# **Centennial Square**

Address: 1 Centennial Square

Neighbourhood: Downtown

**PID:** 025-872-125

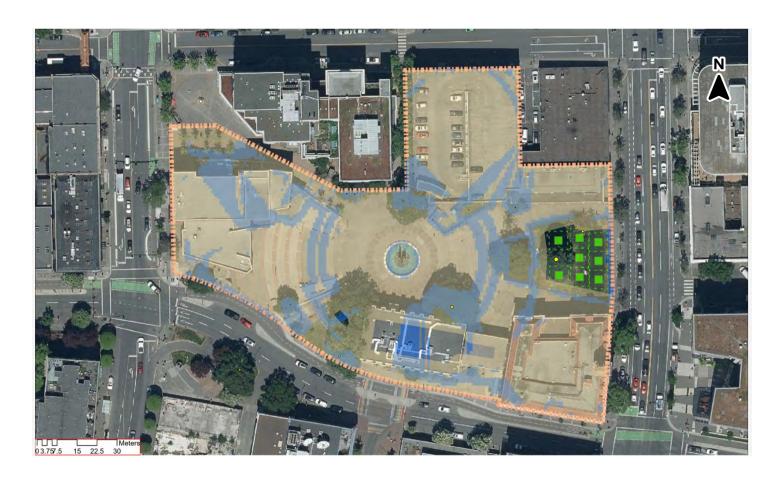


#### Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple civic buildings including City Hall, Centennial Square Parkade and McPherson Playhouse.
- Bike Valet.
- Predominantly hardscaped.
- · Benches and adirondack chairs.
- Central fountain area.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispensers.
- Horticulture multiple shrub and mixed beds, hedging, planters and a raingarden.
- Drinking fountain.
- Washrooms located in Centennial Parkade.
- Public Art Ceramic Fins of Centennial Square Fountain, Two Brother Spirit Poles, Patched In, Infusing Spirits, Celebration Mosaic. Murals include: Lee Mong Kow Family Portrait, Children Running and Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial. Carrying Books, Performing with a Fan and Releasing the Light are also located in/around the Square.

### **Notes:**

- Used heavily for various single and multiday to month-long events such as Kizomba, Folktoria, Mabuhay, AfricaFest, Eventide, Viva Victoria Latin Fest, and Lights of Wonder.
- Centennial Square Revitalization Project is currently underway with Phase 1 construction targeted to commence mid-2025.
- Sheltering is restricted as per Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(viii).



# **Central Park**

Address: 2275 Quadra Street

Neighbourhood: North Park

**PID:** 009-349-952 & 009-350-047 & 009-349-936



### Improvements/facilities:

- Crystal Pool & Fitness Centre (includes multi purpose rooms).
- Sport courts (1 basketball and 2 tennis/pickleball; adjacent bleachers).
- Sports fields (includes 2 ball diamonds with outfield fencing, dugout seating and bleachers).
- Playground.
- Exercise equipment.
- Pathways.
- Fencing.
- Benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispensers.
- Parking.
- Horticulture shrub beds.
- Washrooms are inside the Crystal Pool building.
- Drinking Fountains.

#### **Notes:**

- Central Park was created in 1906 via North Park By-law, No. 486 whereby the City purchased Block 2 and Block 7 from a private owner "for park purposes and for the recreation and enjoyment of the public". Funding for the purchase came from a loan and sale of City properties (see bylaw no. 486).
- Various programs offered via Crystal Pool use playground, sport courts and field space including day camps.
- Steve Nash basketball court sees significant use.
- Sports field used by multiple community groups for soccer and softball.
- Seasonal flooding in portions of park.
- Subject of referendum in February 2025 related to pool/site redevelopment.
- Sheltering is restricted as per Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(ix).





# **Chapman Park**

**Address:** 235, 237 Linden Ave & 1208, 1210, 1212 Chapman

Street

Neighbourhood: Fairfield

**PID:** 008-143-862, 008-143-871, 008-143-854, 008-143-846,

008-143-803

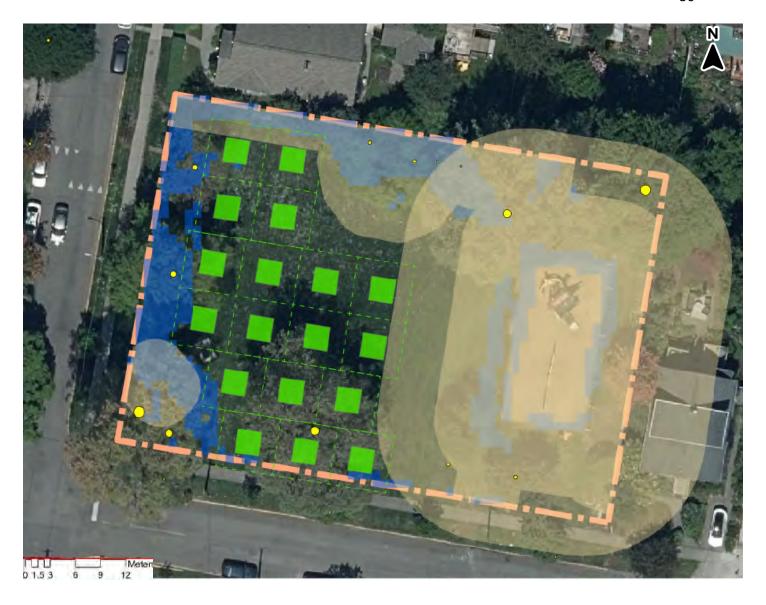


### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches and picnic table.
- Playground.
- Garbage can.

#### **Notes:**

• Lands acquired via tax sales 1921-1926 and subject to *Miscellaneous Parks Reservation Bylaw*, No. 80-04.



# **Charles Redfern Park**

Address: 200 Quebec Street

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 009-387-196, 009-387-285, 009-387-331, 009-

387-218



### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches
- Garbage Can

### **Notes:**

- Land acquired via tax sales 1919-1922, all lots dedicated "as Recreation Grounds and Play Grounds" by *Porter, Stevenson and Redfern Park By-law*, 1925, No. 2329.
- Land subject to Restrictive Covenant 234230G over all lots "no sale or storage of petroleum or petroleum products".



# **Clawthorpe Avenue Park**

Address: 1619 Clawthorpe Avenue

Neighbourhood: Oaklands

PID: No PID

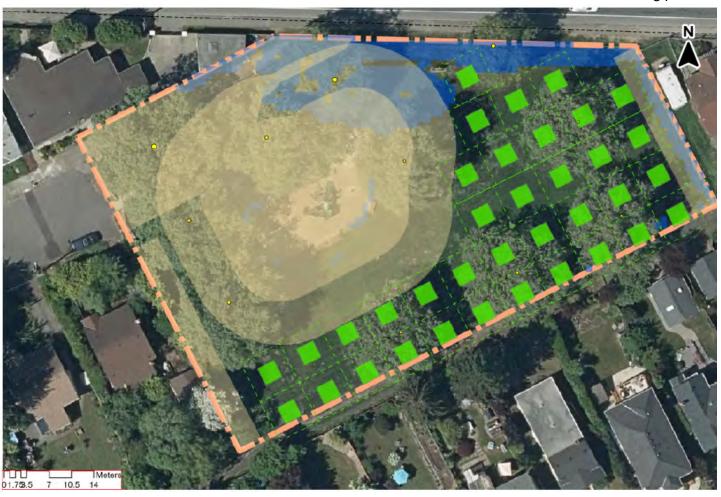
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#### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage can and dog dispenser.
- Partially fenced.

#### Notes:

- District of Saanich to immediate north.
- Land dedicated as park in 2016 via Plan EPP55795.

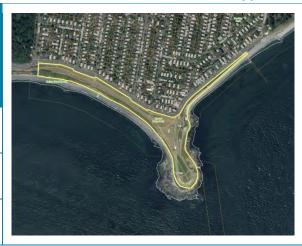


# **Clover Point Park**

Address: 1301 Dallas Road

Neighbourhood: Fairfield

**PID:** 013-026-020, 024-763-004



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple pathways, stairs, railings and retaining walls and Ross Bay Seawall.
- Multiple picnic tables, benches and viewpoints.
- Multiple parking areas.
- Leash optional area (predominantly fenced).
- Multiple garbage cans and dog bag dispensers
- Horticultural shrub beds.
- Public washroom
- Water fountain
- Public Art Millennium Peace

#### **Notes:**

- Transition point of TransCanada Trail into Salish Sea Marine Trail.
- Provides beach access.
- Multiple watersport events (kite surfing, hang-gliding) including Swiftsure Yacht Race.
- Site of multiple different charity walks.



# **Cridge Park**

Address: 730 Belleville Street

Neighbourhood: Downtown

**PID:** 001-122-029



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Pathways. Retaining walls.
- Garbage can.
- Lawn bowling & clubhouse.
- Horticulture rose bed, shrub beds and a fernery.
- Mostly fenced.

#### Notes:

- Land came from Crown Grants 2332-A-132 & 2332-B-132 made 1903.
- Various community events held such as Music in the Park.
- Canadian Pacific Lawn Bowling and Croquet Club operate from park since 1928
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xi).





# **David Spencer Park**

Address: 2760 Victor Street

Neighbourhood: Oaklands

**PID:** 008-309-825, 008-309-744, 008-309-663, 008-309-817, 008-309-451, 008-309-752, 008-309-931, 008-309-850, 008-309-477, 008-309-442, 008-309-949, 008-309-795, 009-309-426, 008-309-485, 008-309-841, 008-309-469, 008-309-710, 008-309-809



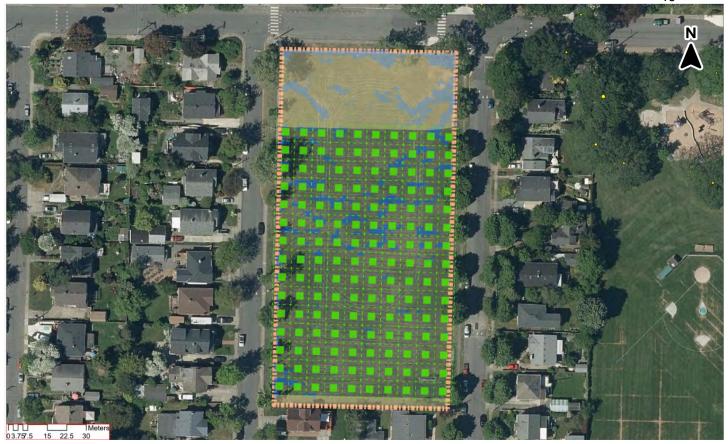
#### Improvements/facilities:

• Onsite infrastructure (baseball backstops, soccer goals/fencing) is School District asset

#### **Notes:**

- School District 61 has been leasing this park since 1967 and is listed in the unsigned 1997
   Master Licence Agreement with SD61.
- Land obtained through tax sales 1920-1937 except for lot 4 was purchased in 1928 for general purposes.
- Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 24, 25, 26 are subject to restrictive covenants regarding buildings on the land.
- Land is subject to 1864 Grant from Hudson's Bay and *David Spencer Park By-law 1928*, No. 2430 and *Miscellaneous Parks Reservation By-law*, No. 80-4.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xii).





# **Ernest Todd Park**

Address: 100, 115,125 135 Montreal Street & 180, 190 Niagara Street

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 009-322-825, 006-721-711, 006-719-597, 006-719-571, 009-322-841, 009-322-833

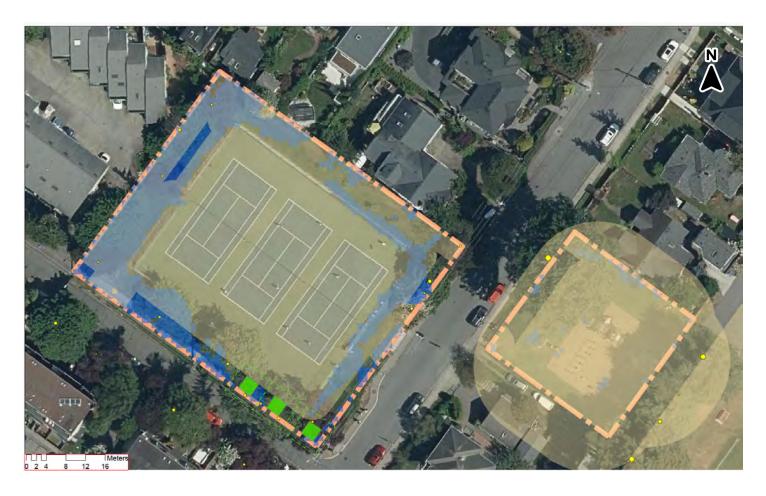


#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Tennis court.
- Benches and picnic table.
- Fencing.
- Garbage can.

#### **Notes:**

- Lots 5, 6, 7, 13 & 14 were purchased from Ernest Todd in 1946 in Trust for "playing fields for the young people" see DD170681I.
- Lot 15 (115 Montreal St) was obtained in 1924 via tax sale. Council Minutes from October 15, 1946 indicate Lot 15 was to be reserved for "playground purposes in conjunction with "Todd Park".
- MacDonald Park is adjacent.



# **Fern Street Playlot**

Address: 1815 & 1829 Fern Street

Neighbourhood: Jubilee

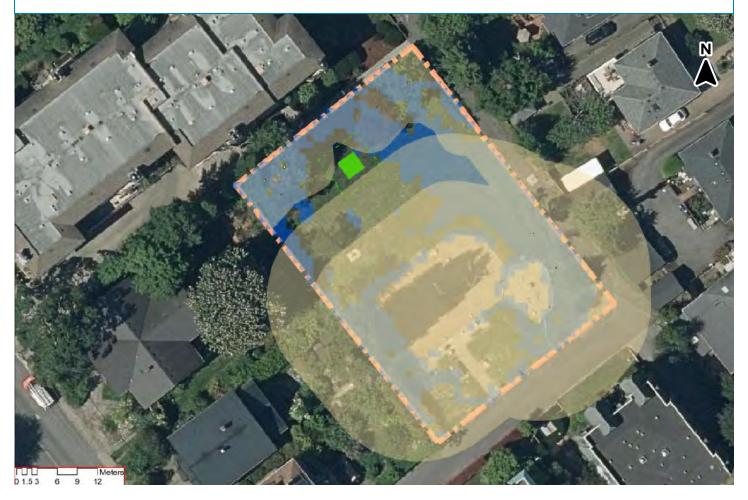
**PID:** 008-674-922, 008-674-876

#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Benches and picnic tables.
- Mostly fenced.
- Limited pathway area.

#### **Notes:**

- Land obtained via 1923 tax sale.
- Grassy portion leased from the adjacent Quaker Church for playground purposes.
- Not available for sheltering due to lease restriction.



# Fisherman's Wharf Park

Address: 300 St. Lawrence & 1 Dallas Road

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 003-476-545



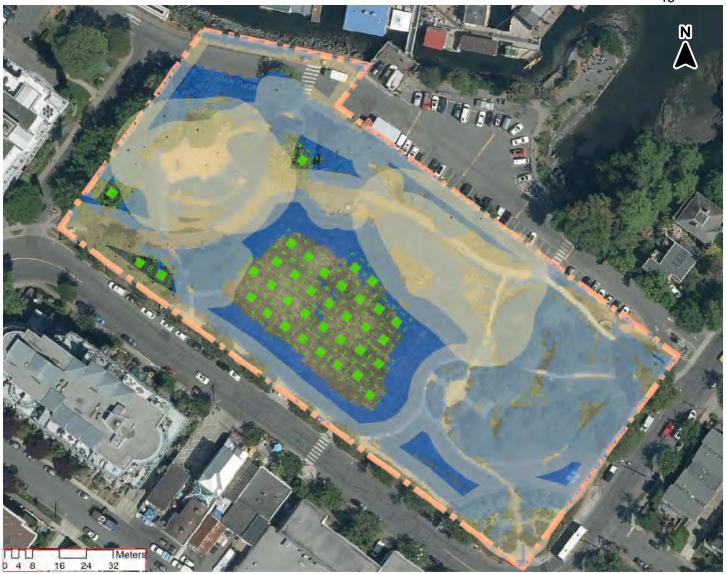
#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Community garden.
- Multiple benches, picnic tables and adirondack chairs. Chess table.
- Multiple pathways. Some railings, stairs, and retaining walls.
- Small arbor/shade structure.
- Horticultural areas including hedge, multiple shrub beds and rain garden (bridge crossing over rain garden).
- Leash optional area.
- Multiple garbage cans and dog bag dispensers.
- Drinking fountain.

#### **Notes:**

- Majority of land obtained via tax sales 1924-1936 and the harbour bed portion was granted to the City by Canada in 1967.
- Subject to Fisherman's Wharf Park Reservation Bylaw, 1973 No. 6532.
- Park includes portion of road areas that connects to Trans Canada Trail and Fishermen's Wharf.
- minor playground upgrades planned 2025.





# **Franklin Green**

Address: 1045 Mason Street

**Neighbourhood:** North Park

PID: 009-411-208, 005-538-220



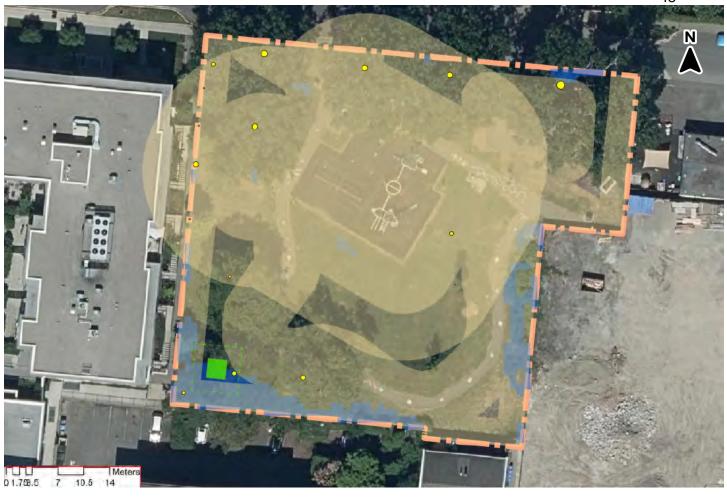
#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Sport court.
- Community garden.
- Pathways.
- Partially fenced.
- Multiple benches and a picnic table.
- Garbage can and dog bag dispenser.
- Drinking fountain.

#### **Notes:**

- Land acquired via tax sales and private purchase.
- Subject to Franklin Green By-law, 1952, No. 3836 and Franklin Green By-law, Amendment By-law (No. 1), No. 3844, reserving the land for public park purposes.
- Commonly used by neighbourhood association.





# **Gonzales Beach Park**

#### Address:

1773, 1785, 1790 Ross Street & 1809 Crescent Road

Neighbourhood: Gonzales

**PID:** 000-762-202, 000-762-211, 005-943-001, 009-210-881



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Fencing on E & W edge.
- Horticulture hedging and shrub beds.
- Various park pathways. Stairs, railings and retaining walls.
- Washroom.
- Public Art Beach Scene.

#### **Notes:**

- Land acquired via tax sales, purchase and expropriation.
- Miscellaneous Parks Reservation Bylaw, No. 80-4 applies to 1785 Ross Street and 1809 Crescent Road.
- Provides access to Gonzales Beach.
- Beach overflow activity; wellness programming.
- Structural work planned for 2026.



# **Gower Park**

#### Address:

2050 Fernwood Road

**Neighbourhood:** Fernwood

**PID:** 000-310-158



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Bench and garbage can.
- Pathway.
- Horticultural areas hedging and shrub bed
- Partially fenced.

#### Notes:

• Land purchased by City in 1973 and dedicated as a park by *Parks Reservation (Pembroke and Fernwood) Bylaw*, No. 81-5



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# **Holland Point Park**

Address: 561 & 645 Dallas Road

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 017-797-039, 017-797-047

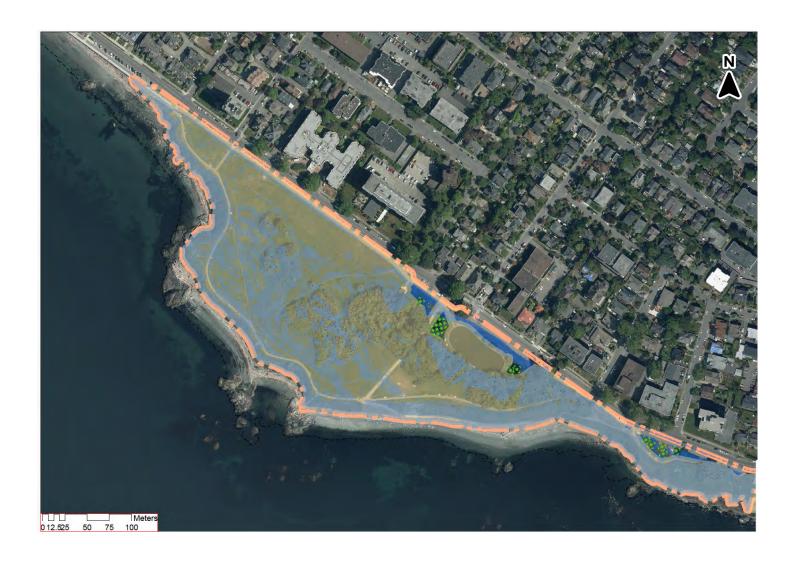


#### Improvements/facilities:

- Harrison Yacht Pond.
- Multiple benches and picnic tables.
- Multiple pathways, stairs, railings and retaining walls.
- Fencing.
- Multiple garbage cans including safe needles disposal. Dog dispensers.
- Washroom.
- Drinking fountains (3).
- Horticulture shrub bed. Large meadow area.
- Natural areas include terrestrial herbaceous, woodland and coastal bluff.
- Public Art Glass Half Full.

#### **Notes:**

- Subject to Holland Point Park By-law, 1947, No. 3293.
- Trans Canada Trail runs along waterside pathway of park.
- Adjacent Dallas Road and near Mile 0.



# **Hollywood Park**

Address: 1635, 1650 Earle Street & 1700 Fairfield Road

Neighbourhood: Gonzales

**PID:** 003-276-414, 006-451-021, 006-450-997



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Sportfields includes baseball backstops, fencing, dugout seating, clubhouse, batting cage. Also used as soccer field.
- Tennis courts (fenced).
- Pathways.
- Multiple benches and picnic tables. Chess tables.
- Garbage cans and sharps receptacles.
- Horticulture -shrub beds and fernery.
- Drinking fountain.
- Washrooms.
- Public Art Wacky Bats.

#### **Notes:**

- Land subject to Hollywood Park By-law, 1932, No. 2579, Hollywood Park Addition By-law, 1933, No. 2621, Hollywood Park Part of Lot 26, Plan 261, Reservation By-law, 1970, No. 6194 and Miscellaneous Parks Reservation By-law, No. 80-4.
- Beacon Hill Little League & Softball Association operates year-round at the park, including use of the batting cages and clubhouse.
- Central Middle School (SD61) also uses the park.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xiv).



# **Irving Park**

**Address:** 250 Menzies Street and 455, 461, 475, 481 & 491 Michigan Street

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 009-306-277, 009-306-455, 009-306-366, 009-306-358, 009-

306-315, 009-306-293



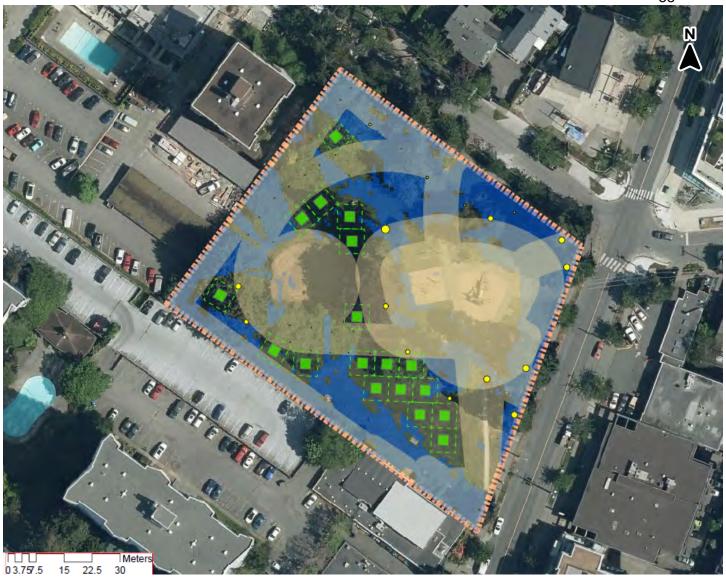
#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Pathways (including a seven circuit-stone labyrinth).
- Multiple benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage cans, sharps receptacles and a dog bag dispenser.
- Community garden.
- Horticulture shrubs beds and hedging.
- Drinking fountain.
- Washrooms.
- Public Art Vicino Project and International Bridge of Friendship.

#### **Notes:**

- Land acquired via tax sale and reserved as park by James Bay Playground Reservation Bylaw, 1978, No. 78-3.
- New Horizons Activity Centre is adjacent park.
- Various community activity events occur in park such as community yoga.
- Washroom upgrade scheduled for 2026.
- Playground update planning to commence in 2025.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xv).





# **Jackson Street Park**

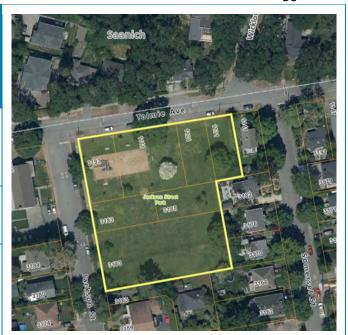
#### Address:

1111, 1121, 1131 Tolmie Avenue & 3173, 3183, 3185, 3193 Jackson Street

Neighbourhood: Hillside Quadra

#### PID:

006-366-287, 006-366-317, 007-620-861, 008-454-078, 006-366-627, 006-366-350, 006-366-228

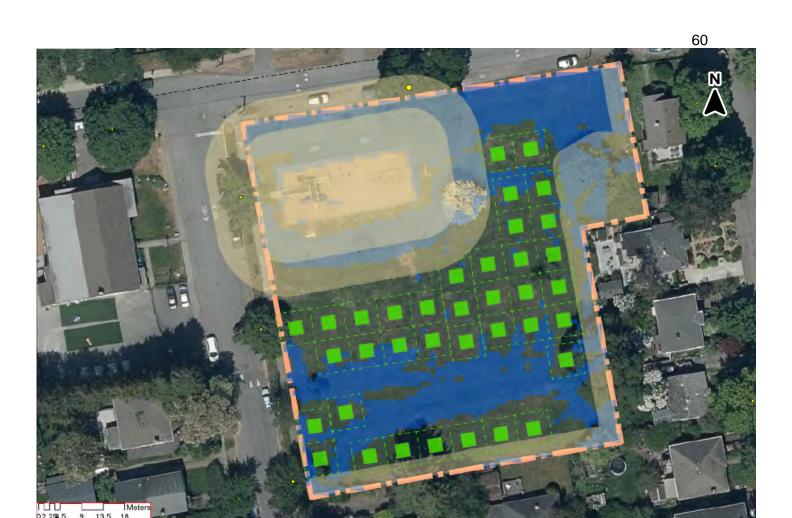


#### Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple benches. Picnic table
- Playground
- Partially fenced.

#### **Notes:**

- Lands purchased through tax sales 1922-1943 and subject to *Miscellaneous Parks Reservation Bylaw*, No. 80-04.
- District of Saanich to immediate north.
- Playground update planning to commence 2026.



# **Johnson Street Green**

**Address:** 1355, 1375, 1410, 1412, 1425 Johnson

Street & 1391 Pandora Ave

Neighbourhood: Fernwood

**PID:** 001-281-518, 001-281-500, 002-048-817, 000-229-695, 000-229-687, 000-229-717



#### Improvements/facilities:

• Horticulture – hedge (southern edge of longest linear section).

Notes: N/A



# **Kings Park**

Address: 1150 & 1154 Caledonia Avenue

Neighbourhood: Fernwood

**PID:** 009-288-759, 009-288-755



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Pathway.
- Bench.
- Garbage can.

#### **Notes:**

- Land gifted to City for park purposes in 1963 and subject to *King Park Reservation By-law, 1963*, No. 5381.
- Restoration sites in NE and SW corners of park.
- Remnant garry oak stand.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xvi).



# **Lime Bay Park**

Address: 10 Cooperage Place

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

PID: No PID



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Multiple garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Multiple horticultural areas shrub beds.
- Includes natural areas of terrestrial herbaceous and coastal bluff.
- Public Art: Hands of Time Carving a Canoe Paddle.

#### **Notes:**

- Land dedicated as park via Plan VIP46682
- Connects West Song Walkway to Lime Bay Beach (part of existing greenway)



# **MacDonald Park**

Address: 212 Niagara Street

Neighbourhood: James Bay

PID: 006-726-330



#### Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Community garden.
- Sports field (2 rugby fields/4 ballfields with backstops and ball diamond seating).
- Benches and picnic tables. Multiple bleachers.
- Pathways.
- Parking area.
- Garbage cans, sharps receptacles and dog bag dispensers.
- Horticulture hedge.
- Drinking fountain.
- Washrooms.
- Concession licenced to James Bay Neighbourhood Association for storage of recreational equipment and other supplies.

#### Notes:

- Majority of land acquired via tax sale in 1923.
- Subject to 1974 Licence Agreement with SD61 re use of park during school days.
- Reserved for park purposes via Macdonald Park Reservation By-law, 1976, No. 7019.
- Multiple groups use park with James Bay Athletic Association (rugby) being a primary user group (and their clubhouse is adjacent park). Also heavily used by many slow-pitch teams.
- Adjacent to James Bay Community School who uses regularly uses field space.
- Site of various community events including Pridefest
- Adjacent Simcoe Street Greenway.
- Sheltering is restricted as per Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xvii).



# **Mary Street Park**

**Address:** 250, 390, 400 Milne Street & 260, 270, 280

Catherine Street

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 008-940-941, 008-948-496, 008-941-165, 008-941-238, 004-812-794, 016-792-629, 001-062-956, 008-946-922, 008-948-313, 008-948-318, 008-947-759, 004-812-778, 025-628-151



## Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple pathways.
- Stairs, railings and retaining walls.
- Garbage can.
- Horticultural areas shrub beds.

#### **Notes:**

- Subject to Park Reservation (Lime Bay and Foot of Mary Street) Bylaw, No. 91-8
- Primarily pathway.
- Connects Lime Bay Beach to Rainbow Park.
- Spinnakers Pub patio occupies portion of park.



# **Mayfair Green/Tolmie Park**

Address: No civic address

Neighbourhood: Hillside Quadra

**PID:** 005-686-865



## Improvements/facilities:

Pathways'

## Notes:

- Land gifted in 1963 by CMHC to City in in trust for park and/or road purposes only.
- Subject to Restrictive Covenant 135963G regarding buildings on land.
- Adjacent Blanshard Street (Provincial Highway 17).



## **Oaklands Park**

Address: 1550 Kings Road

Neighbourhood: Oaklands

**PID:** 008-306-851, 008-306-877, 008-308-403, 008-308-438, 008-308-471, 008-308-497, 009-757-864, 009-835-962, 008-306-834, 008-306-842, 008-326-631

## Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Baseball backstop, ball diamond seating and bleachers.
- Tennis/pickleball courts (4) and sport court.
- Multiple benches and picnic tables.
- Exercise equipment.
- Leash optional area.
- Multiple garbage cans and dog bag dispenser
- Horticultural areas small shrub beds
- Multiple park pathways.
- Fencing, (fully fenced around tennis courts), small retaining walls.
- Washroom and drinking fountain.

#### **Notes:**

- Lands subject to Oaklands Park Dedication By-law, 1957, No. 4551, Oaklands Park Reservation Bylaw, 1974, No. 6706 and Oaklands Park Reservation By-law 1975, No. 6815
- Existing greenway cuts through park (N/S and E/W).
- National Little League commonly uses ball diamond and with various community soccer associations using field space.





# **Olive Street Green**

Address: 181 Olive Street

Neighbourhood: Fairfield

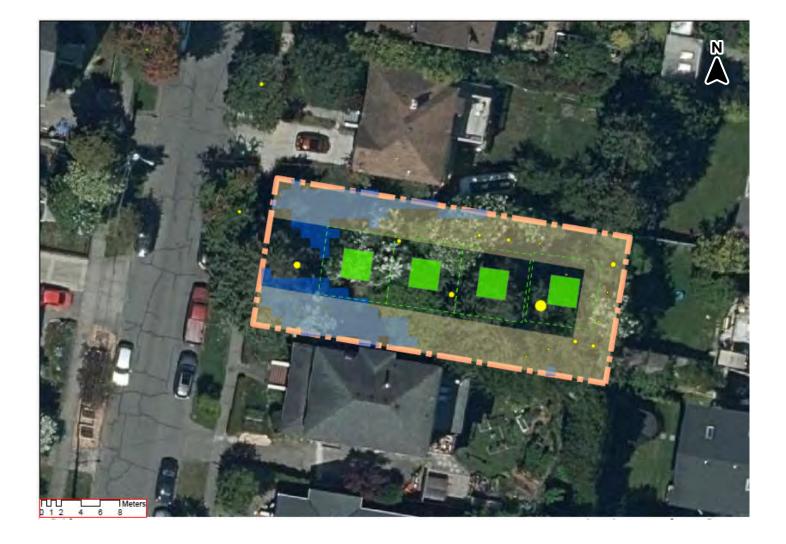
**PID:** 009-148-302

## Improvements/facilities:

Partially fenced.

## **Notes:**

• Land acquired via tax sale in 1922.





## **Oswald Park**

**Address:** 2820, 2825, 2830, 2835, 2840, 2845, 2850, 2855, 2860, 2865, 2870, 2875, 2930, 2935, 2945, 2955 Oswald Road & 3031 Cedar Hill Rd

Neighbourhood: Oaklands

**PID:** 008-407-037, 008-408-904, 008-407-029, 008-408-882, 008-407-011, 008-408-530, 008-407-002, 008-408-513, 008-406-995, 008-408-491, 008-406-987, 008-408-416, 008-406-979, 008-408-378, 008-408-360, 008-408-351, 008-407-401



## Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Baseball backstop and ball diamond. Sport court.
- Leash optional area (fenced).
- Multiple pathways.
- Multiple benches and picnic table.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispensers.
- Multiple horticultural areas including shrub bed and community garden.
- Drinking fountain.

#### **Notes:**

- 2945 Oswald Rd is licenced to Oaklands Community Association for a community garden.
- Majority of land acquired via tax sales (1923-1942), a portion acquired in 1932 in exchange for tax sale lands, another portion purchased in 1961 for a playground and in 1980 the City closed a portion of Oswald Road with the permission of BC.
- Subject to Miscellaneous Parks Reservation By-law, No. 80-4 and Park Reservation (Oswald Street Playground Addition) By-law, No. 80-123.



## **Pemberton Park**

Address: 1855 & 1857 Richardson Street

**Neighbourhood**: Gonzales

**PID:** 006-248-969

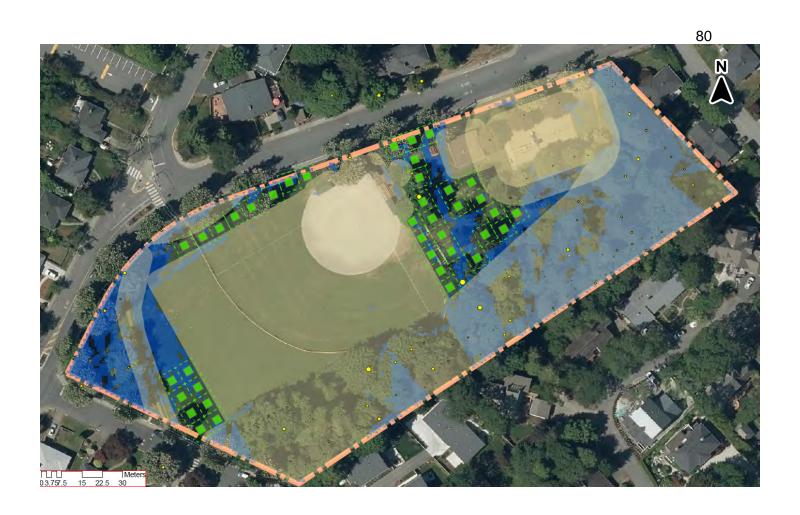


## Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Ball diamond and sports field.
- Ball diamond seating and bleachers. Softball backstop. Scoreboard. Baseball-related structures (clubhouse/dugout).
- Fencing, around trees/natural areas and ball field.
- Multiple benches. Picnic table.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Multiple pathways.
- Natural area woodland.
- Leash optional area.
- Drinking fountain.
- Washroom.

## **Notes:**

- Majority of park land designated park pursuant to Plan VIP10163, with PID: 006-248-969 designated as park via *Miscellaneous Parks Reservation Bylaw*, No. 80-4.
- Primary user group is Beacon Hill Little League & Softball Association.
- Park also used for community soccer and various neighbourhood events.
- Existing greenway cuts through west edge of park.
- Playground renewal planned for 2025.

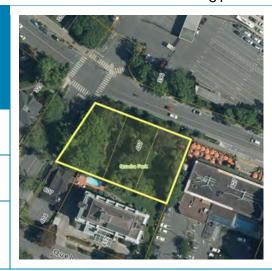


# **Quadra Park**

Address: 407 Belleville Street

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 000-487-767, 000-487-791, 000-487-783

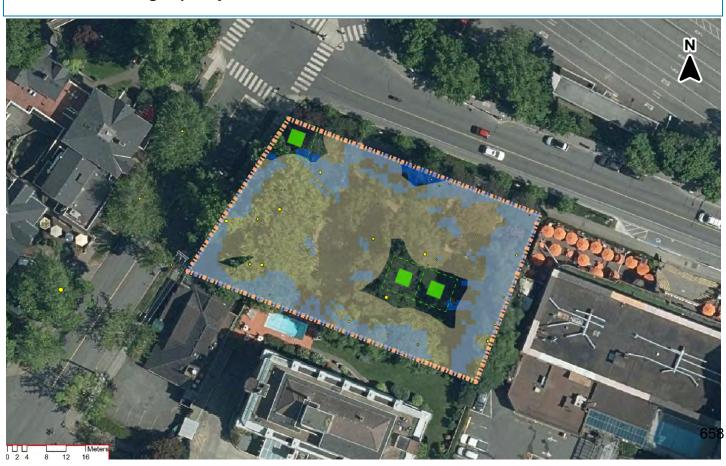


## Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Pathways
- Garbage can.
- Horticultural multiple shrub beds and rose beds near Oswego/Belleville corner.

## **Notes:**

- Land is subject to Crown Grant No. 3662/1207 (N41215) restricting its usage as "a park for public recreation and enjoyment".
- Minor park improvements planned for 2025
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xix).



# **Raynor Park**

Address: 530 Raynor Ave

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 018-156-975

## Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Bench and picnic tables.
- Pathway.
- Garbage can.
- Fencing.
- Horticulture shrub beds.

## Notes:

- Land is reserved for park purposes pursuant to *Park Reservation (Raynor Avenue) Bylaw*, No. 93-65.
- Existing greenway cuts through park.





## **Redfern Park**

Address: 1755 Redfern Street

Neighbourhood: Jubilee

**PID:** 008-375-828, 008-375-810, 008-375-135, 008-375-984, 008-375-933, 008-375-917, 008-375-887, 008-375-852, 008-375-941, 008-376-018, 008-376-310, 008-376-271, 008-376-174, 008-376-123



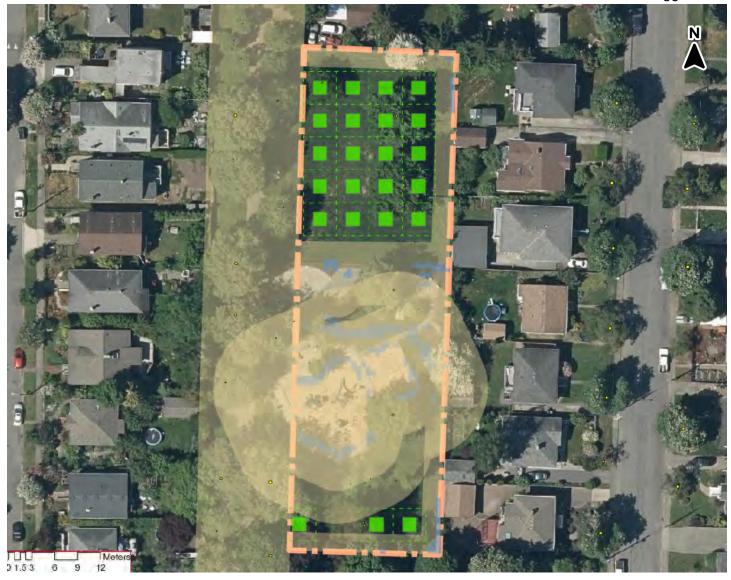
## Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Community Garden.
- Gazebo.
- Benches.
- Off leash area.
- Garbage can and dog bag dispensers.
- Multiple pathways.
- Partially fenced.
- Horticulture-shrub beds.
- Drinking fountain.

## **Notes:**

- All lots acquired via tax sales 1920-1931.
- Reserved for park land via Miscellaneous Parks Reservation By-law, No. 80-4.
- Community events held in park such as Parkfest @ Redfern Commons





# **Regatta Point Park**

Address: 1 Regatta Landing & 869 Tyee Road

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 017-947-324



## Improvements/facilities:

- Pathway.
- Two water access points, dock and covered structure/over-water platform.
- Multiple benches and retaining walls.
- Garbage cans and a dog bag dispenser.
- Naturalized shoreline.
- Horticulture-rain garden and various shrub beds.

#### **Notes:**

- PID: 017-947-324 is owned by Province, with SRW EV53480 registered over the land in favour of the City for the "construction, operation and maintenance of a public park".
- Other portions of land dedicated as park via Plans VIP76024, VIP77618 & VIP89279
- Primarily pathway. Includes Galloping Goose Trail and is a portion of the TransCanada Trail.
- Community events occur along pathway such as SKAMpepe.
- Provides two water access points to the Gorge Waterway.
- Public washroom immediately adjacent (80 Regatta Landing).
- Drinking fountain adjacent in TransCanada Parkette.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xxi).





# **Rupert Terrace Green**

Address: 850 Quadra Street

Neighbourhood: Downtown

**PID:** 002-071-100



## Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Horticulture areas including hedges, shrub bed and rose bed.

## Notes:

- Purchased by City in 1967 for "proposed southerly extension of Quadra Street".
- Mostly surrounded by roads.



# Scurrah Green

Address: 1580 Fort Street

Neighbourhood: Fernwood

**PID:** 008-079-340

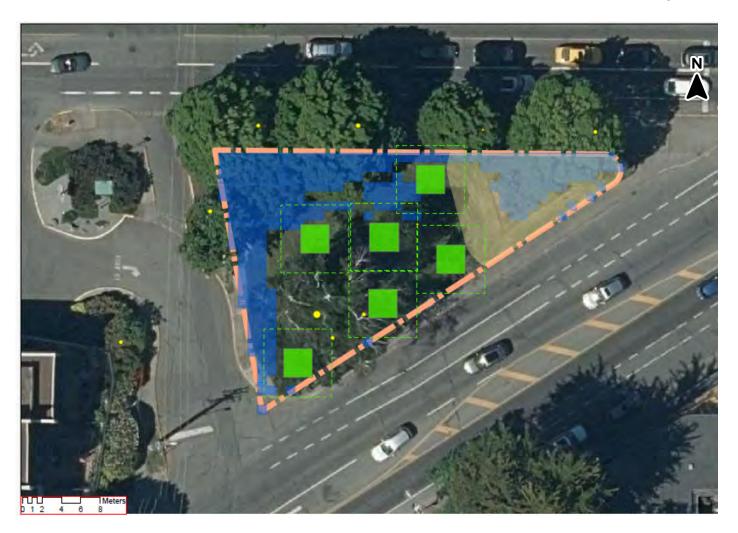


## Improvements/facilities:

- Bench.
- Horticulture mixed bed.
- Retaining walls.

## Competing uses:

- Purchased by City in 1971.
- Mostly surrounded by roads.



## **Selkirk Green**

Address: 350 Waterfront Crescent

Neighbourhood: Burnside

PID: No PID

# egit road

## Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Pathways.
- Horticulture shrub bed, includes structure (arbours).
- Retaining walls.
- Multiple garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.

## Notes:

- Dedicated as Park in 1997 via Legal Plan VIP65769.
- Multiple community events including Selkirk Waterfront Festival.
- Used requesting by Montessori School for events.
- Water access across the street.



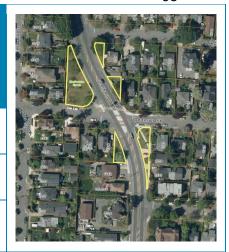


## **Shelbourne Green**

Address: 2270, 2305 and 2325 Shelbourne Street

Neighbourhood: Fernwood / Jubilee

**PID:** 009-102-981, 009-070-079, 009-069-291, 001-281-534



## Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Pathways and Stairs.
- Horticulture hedging.

## Notes:

Multiple portions bisected by road.



## **Sitkum Park**

Address: 200 Kimta Road

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

PID: No PID

## Improvements/facilities:

Horticulture – shrub bed.

• Partially paved, used for parking.

## Notes:

- Dedicated as park via Plan VIP46682
- Adjacent E & N Kimta Connector.





# Songhees Hillside Park

Address: 40 Saghalie Road

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

PID: No PID



## Improvements/facilities:

- Benches.
- Multiple park paths.
- Stairs and railings.
- Multiple retaining walls.
- Substantial horticulture areas shrub beds.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Leash optional area.

## Notes:

- Dedicated as Park via Plan VIP74716.
- Adjacent E & N Kimta Connector.



# **Songhees Park**

Address: 56 Songhees Road

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 014-388-171

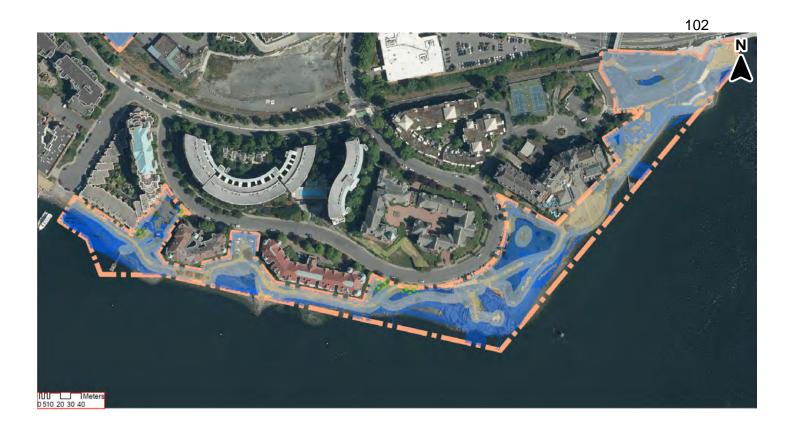


## Improvements/facilities:

- Multiple paths. Stairs and railings. Retaining walls.
- Multiple benches. Picnic tables and adirondack chairs.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Horticulture multiple beds included annual, mixed shrub as well as various raised beds, planters and hedges.
- Natural area coastal beach.
- Drinking fountain.
- Public Art (3) including:
  - o Spirit of Lekwungen Nation The Land of the Winds;
  - o Signs of Lekwungen Four Winds; and
  - o Journey.

#### **Notes:**

- Lands dedicated as park via Plans VIP48822, VIP48016 and VIP46682.
- PID: 014-388-171 leased to Victoria Harbour Ferry Co. Ltd. for their dock.
- Predominantly walkway and part of existing greenway.
- Multiple community events held in park including SKAMpede and Wonderment

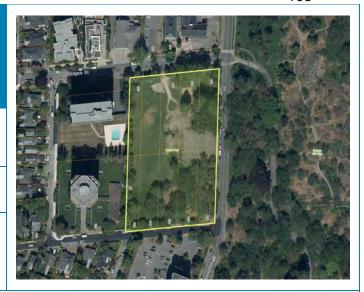


## **South Park**

**Address:** 630, 640, 650, 660,670 Toronto Street & 657, 667, 677, 687 697 Michigan Street

Neighbourhood: James Bay

**PID:** 009-381-830, 009-381-716, 009-381-724, 009-397-736, 009-381-759, 009-397-728, 009-381-783, 009-397-710, 009-397-701, 009-397-698



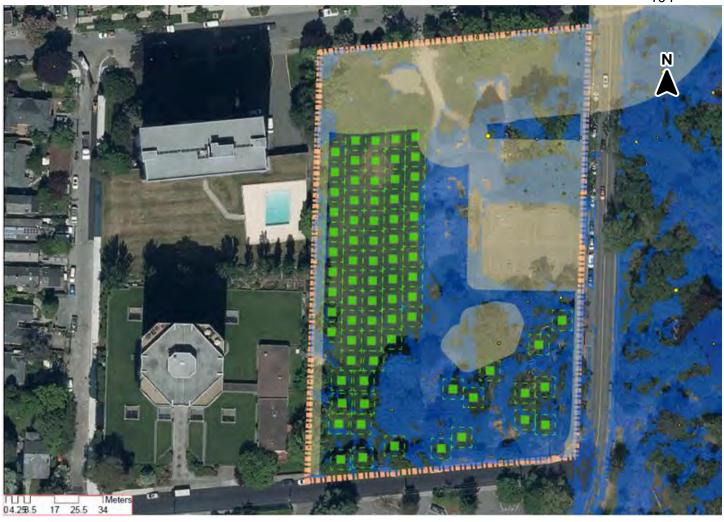
## Improvements/facilities:

Onsite infrastructure (playground) is School District asset

#### **Notes:**

- Land obtained via tax sales in 1937
- Subject to Park Reservation (Lewis Street Park and South Park) Bylaw No. 97-81.
- Used by School District 61.
- Beacon Hill Park located directly across Douglas Street to east.
- Site is adjacent existing greenways system on Douglas and Toronto Streets.
- Sheltering is restricted as per Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xxiii).





# **Stadacona Park**

Address: 1451 Elford Street & 1490 Pandora Ave

Neighbourhood: Fernwood

**PID:** 006-477-674, 005-554-543

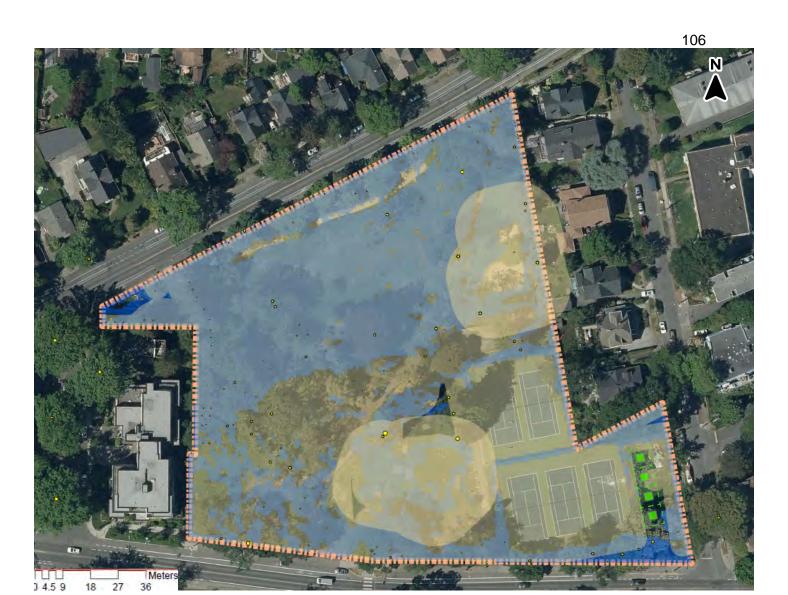


# Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Recent natural areas restoration and garry oak ecosystem enhancement.
- Various pathways fencing and retaining walls.
- Benches and picnic tables.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Horticulture shrub beds and perennial bed.
- Public Art 'Canada 150' public art.

#### **Notes:**

- Land acquired via tax sales, expropriation/purchases for road purposes and purchases for park purposes
- Miscellaneous Parks Reservation By-law, No. 80-4
- Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) identifies most of the park area as woodland.
- Greenways system cuts through park.
- Used by SD61 and other organizations for tennis.
- Sheltering is restricted as per Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xxiv).



# **Sumas Park**

**Address:** 524, 530 & 534 Sumas Street

Neighbourhood: Burnside

**PID:** 007-867-387, 007-867-395, 007-867-409



# Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Benches and picnic table.
- Pathway.
- Garbage can.
- Fencing.

### Notes:

• Land obtained through tax sale proceedings 1922-1934 and is reserved as a Public Park pursuant to *Sumas Play-ground Dedication By-law*, 1956, No. 4367



# **Topaz Park**

Address: 841 Finlayson Street & 2950 3050

**Blanshard Street** 

Neighbourhood: Hillside Quadra

**PID:** 003-854-752, 003-652-297, 004-040-210,

004-487-257



## Improvements/facilities:

- All-wheels skate and bike park.
- Playground.
- Multiple sport fields (turf field & grass fields) ball diamonds and tennis court.
- Field house.
- Bleachers.
- Multiple benches, picnic tables, adirondack chairs.
- Multiple dog bag dispensers and garbage cans.
- Pathways, various retaining walls, fencing.
- Leash optional areas (2).
- Washrooms.
- Drinking fountains.
- Horticulture annual and shrub beds. Rain garden.
- Sensitive ecosystem (garry oak meadow and woodland, terrestrial herbaceous).
- Public Art (2) The Rushes and Scenic Serentiy.

#### Notes:

- Topaz Park Reservation Bylaw, 1966, No. 5780
- Miscellaneous Parks Reservation By-law, No. 80-4
- Topaz Park Improvement Plan approved June 2018. Currently Phase 2 improvements are underway including 11 pickleball courts, central plaza area, pathways and updated leashoptional area.
- Multiple community events occur in park including various skate/bike events as well as annual
  events including the Highland Games, One Day, and Beer Fest.
- Multiple user groups including: Bays United Soccer, VicWest FC, Castaways FC, Greater Victoria Mixed slow pitch league.
- Existing greenway cuts through site from Finlayson to Glasgow.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xxvi).



# Victoria West Park

Address: 85 Bay Steet & 155 Wilson Street

Neighbourhood: Victoria West

**PID:** 001-481-177



# Improvements/facilities:

- Playground.
- Skate park.
- Basketball court.
- Lawn bowling.
- Baseball backstops and sport field.
- Leash optional areas.
- Fencing.
- Pathways.
- Benches, picnic tables and adirondack chairs.
- Horticulture shrub beds near and hedging.
- Multiple garbage cans, dog bag dispenser and sharps receptacle.
- Washrooms
- Drinking fountains (3)
- Public Art 'Dog Planet'

## **Notes:**

- Majority of park created by Subdivision Plan VIP48622.
- 1977 Lease with Victoria West Lawn Bowling Club and related Victoria West (Lawn Bowling Pavilion) Bylaw, 1977, No. 7238 over both portions of Victoria West Park.
- Community league use commonly slow pitch and or soccer.
- Various events including Memorial Drag Ball.
- Sheltering is restricted as per *Parks Regulation Bylaw* No. 07-059, s. 16A(2)(b)(xxvii).



# William Stevenson Memorial Park

Address: 1240 Gladstone Avenue

Neighbourhood: Fernwood

**PID:** 003-808-572



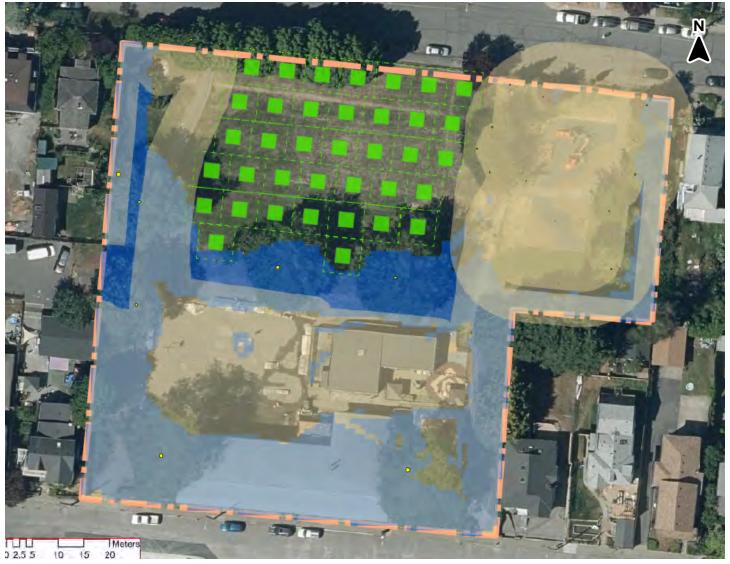
# Improvements/facilities:

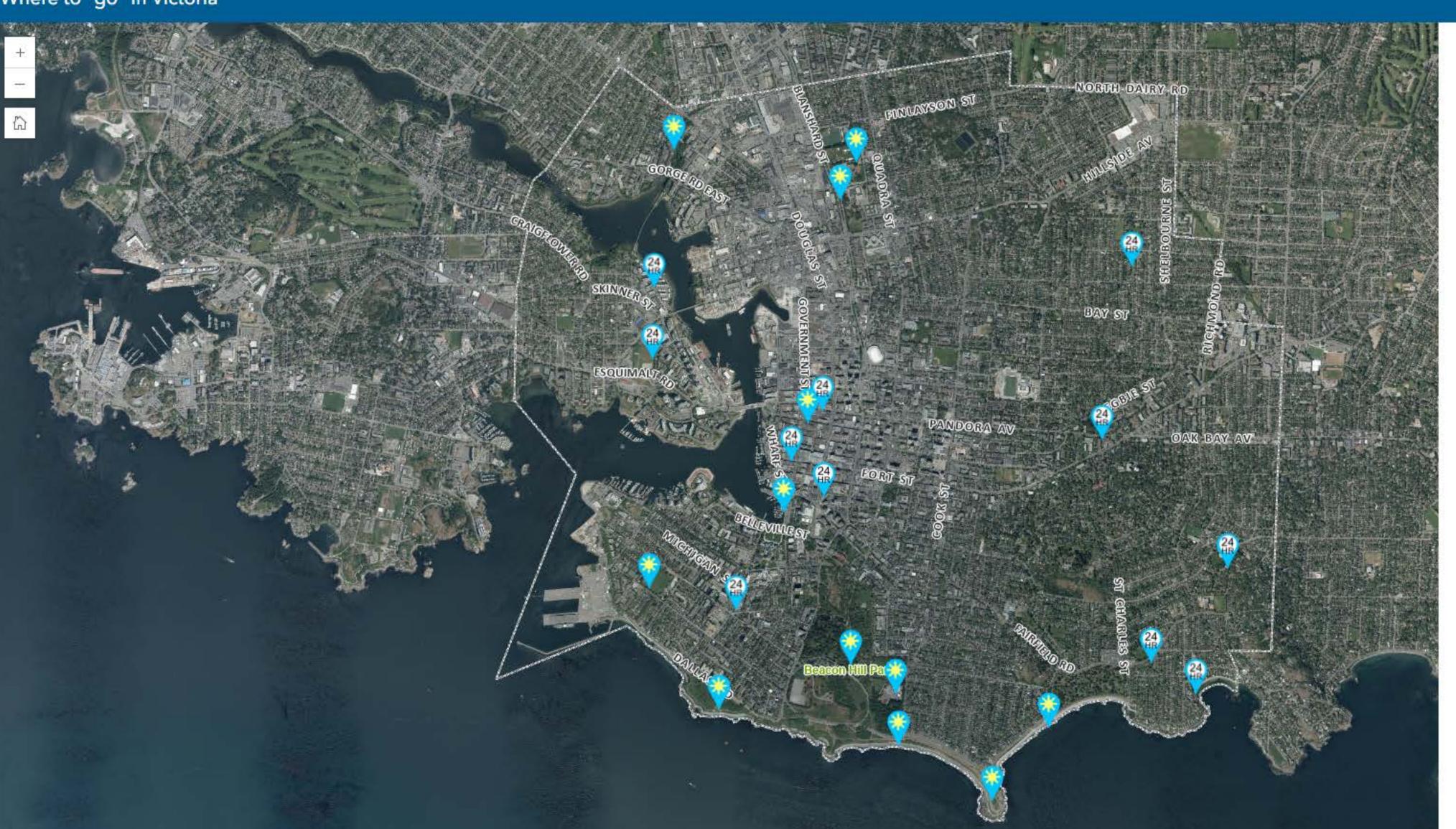
- Playground.
- Community garden, community orchard and native plant meadow.
- Sport court.
- Fernwood Community Centre & Daycare.
- Benches and picnic table.
- Pathways and stairs. Railings and retaining walls.
- Garbage cans and dog bag dispenser.
- Drinking fountain.

#### **Notes:**

- Land purchased 1922-1924 for general purposes.
- Subject to Porter, Stevenson and Redfern Park By-law, 1925, No. 2329
- Fernwood Community Centre located in park, includes childcare centre.
- Multiple community markets and events held in park including Fernfest and Fibrations.
- Community centre programming via Fernwood Neighbourhood House.
- Existing greenway rungs along Gladstone.
- Community well in NE section.
- Licenced to Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society (portable building, community garden and community orchard)







Public Washrooms

HoursOfOperation



24 hours a day, 7 days a week



Dawn to dusk



# **Committee of the Whole Report**

For the Meeting of March 13, 2025

**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** March 6, 2025

From: Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer

Subject: 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan – Impact of Esquimalt Council's Decision on Police

• Budget

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On March 3, 2025, Esquimalt Council considered the 2025 provisional police budget and declined to approve all additional positions and funding for the late night program.

Under the legislation, if a budget line item is not approved by one of the two councils, that item is not included in the financial plans of either municipality. However, despite Esquimalt Council's decision, Victoria Council can choose to levy taxes for all or some of the declined budget line items, as was done in 2023 for two police officer positions. In that case, the funding was set aside and held by the City pending the outcome of the *Police Act* section 27 appeal.

The impact to the City's budget of the declined budget line items is as follows:

Budget Item	Total Budget	City Portion 86.33%	Property Tax Impact
New positions:			
6 police officers, related recruitment costs and equipment	\$681,450	\$588,296	0.32%
Community program manager	100,892	87,100	0.05%
Cybersecurity analyst	75,786	65,426	0.04%
Logistics coordinator	65,452	56,505	0.03%
Recruitment costs	<u>1,845</u>	<u>1,593</u>	<u>0.001%</u>
	\$925,425	\$798,920	0.44%
Late night program	\$230,000	\$198,560	<u>0.11%</u>
Total	<u>\$1,155,425</u>	\$997,480	<u>0.55%</u>

If Council takes no action, the budget line items in the table above will not be included in the City's Financial Plan resulting in a budget reduction of \$997,480, which would also reduce the overall tax increase from 7.78% to 7.23% (4% City portion and 3.23% for police).

If Council wishes to levy taxes for all or some of the declined budget items and set that funding aside, a resolution to that effect would be required.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Thompson Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager



# **Council Member Motion For the COTW Meeting of March 13, 2025**

To: Committee of the Whole Date: March 04, 2025

From: Councillor Jeremy Caradonna

**Subject:** Mitigating the impacts of the projected multi-year interrupted service to Victoria's

aquatics program and wellness centre

## **Background**

In February of 2025, Victoria voters approved the Crystal Pool replacement project and associated borrowing amounts via referendum. In addition, as non-binding input to Council, voters overwhelmingly selected the "North" option, which is to knock down and rebuild the future facility on the same footprint as the current one. As a result of this decision, and assuming Council takes this clear direction from voters, it would result in multiple years of interrupted service to Victoria's only publicly managed pool and wellness centre. These disruptions will create challenges for hundreds of thousands of users who rely on these essential wellbeing services.

The intention of this motion is to begin working, very early on in the process, on mitigating the impacts of the projected facility closure, mainly through collaboration with key regional partners.

#### Recommendation

That, following the finalization of the Crystal Pool replacement project loan authorization bylaw and the decision on the location of the future facility,

- Council directs staff, or Council members who are members of the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC), to advocate to the VRTC to consider options to alter transit routes, on a temporary basis, to accommodate current Crystal Pool users during periods of interrupted facility services.
- Council directs staff to work with the staff from Esquimalt, Oak Bay, and Saanich to coordinate ways of mitigating the impacts on regional recreation centres of the Crystal Pool closure, and ensuring that Victorians have access to regional aquatics facilities throughout the redevelopment project.
- Council directs the Mayor to advocate to Uvic to consider re-opening McKinnon Pool at least until the new Crystal Pool is completed, to accommodate the need for access to aquatic facilities from displaced Crystal Pool users.

4. Council directs staff to reach out to the operators of Victoria-based hotels with large pool amenities to discuss the possibility of increasing public access to one or more privately owned pools during periods of interrupted service at the Crystal Pool.

Councillor Jeremy Caradonna



# **Council Member Motion For the COTW Meeting of March 13, 2025**

To: Committee of the Whole Date: March 13, 2025

From: Councillor Jeremy Caradonna and Councillor Krista Loughton

Subject: Advocacy to the Province to Modify Amenity Cost Charge Policy to Better Support

Affordable Housing

## **Background**

The Province has created new legislation that brings shape and clarity to the amenity contributions that developers make to local governments. These Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs) will replace the more freewheeling system of Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) that cities have relied on to fund parks, public realm improvements, arts, and affordable housing for the past many years.

In general, this provincial legislation is welcome and will add much-needed order and standards to amenity contributions. That said, the current policy contains a flaw, in that it does not allow ACCs to be used for non-predetermined projects identified ahead of time by staff. As a result, it would be challenging to use ACCs as a means of recapitalizing the City's Housing Reserve Fund (HRF), which is used to finance or co-invest in affordable housing projects. Currently, CAC monies regularly recapitalize the HRF, where they often sit for 6 months or a year before being used to finance affordable housing. This system works very well, and the City generally has no trouble finding affordable housing projects to co-invest in.

Here are the facts on the Housing Reserve Fund:

- Current unrestricted balance: \$2.2m
- Annual contributions to the HRF in a typical year from property taxes: \$400k
- Approximate amount that the City has furnished to affordable housing projects since October of 2022: \$6m

If the provincial ACC policy is not tweaked to allow for ACCs to finance non-predetermined projects, including affordable housing, then the City will be deprived of an incredibly important

revenue stream to replenish the HRF. This outcome would have a negative effect on the City's ability to advance affordable housing during a housing affordability crisis.

If the ACC policy is not changed, the only ways to replenish the HRF moving forward would be: 1) property taxes (or other civic revenue sources), 2) stratified bonus density projects, or 3) voluntary donations. Some monies would likely come from stratified bonus density projects, but the rest would come from property taxes, and \$400k annually is simply not enough to keep pace with the demand for HRF investments from non-market housing providers.

To be clear, the City has three main ways that it supports housing affordability: 1) through approvals of non-market housing projects, 2) via policies that encourage affordability, and 3) through direct investments via the HRF. The third pillar would be compromised without changes in ACC policy from the Province.

Finally, there are many examples in recent years of affordable housing projects that have relied on HRF financing to close equity gaps and make projects viable. These financial contributions are not symbolic handouts, but rather essential forms of financing that help get projects over the line. Recent grants include Caledonia (CRHC, \$1m), Village on the Green (CRHC, \$2.4m), Michigan Square (CRHC, \$620k), Chown Place (Gorge View Society, \$770k), and Forest Heights (Greater Victoria Housing Society, \$2.5m).

#### Recommendation

That Council directs the Mayor to advocate to relevant provincial Ministries and MLAs, without slowing down or otherwise affecting the adoption of any City bylaws related to the Official Community Plan updating process, to request:

- either amendments to the provincial Amenity Cost Charge (ACC) policy that would allow ACCs to be used to support non-predetermined affordable housing projects, for instance via the City's Housing Reserve Fund, or the creation of an alternate cost charge tool that could be used to invest in affordable housing; and
- 2. any additional minor amendments to the ACC policy, identified by staff and the Mayor, that would advance the City's strategic interests.

Coun. Jeremy Caradonna

Coun. Krista Loughton



# **Council Member Motion For the COTW Meeting of March 13, 2025**

To: Committee of the Whole Date: 7 March 2025

From: Mayor Marianne Alto

**Subject:** Financial contribution to the Border Mayors Alliance

### **Background**

The Border Mayors Alliance is an association of Mayors, originally convened by the Mayor of Windsor, Ontario, established to coordinate local governments and their communication, collaboration, and response to national tariffs from the US Administration. This group, currently consisting of 40 members across Canada predominantly proximate to the US border, represents communities that are affected by US tariffs. Mayor Alto has been participating since the Alliance's 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

Members have been asked to contribute funds to support the operations of the Alliance and must contribute to maintain their membership. Each municipality's contribution is calculated on a per capita basis. Recent census data indicate the current population of the City of Victoria is 102,856, resulting in a fee for the city of \$5,037.27.

## **Rationale for Same Day Council Consideration**

The US Administration continues to shift and change their implementation of, and threats regarding, Canada-US tariffs. This is a fluid situation which changes rapidly, requiring increasingly intense response from the BMA, precipitating the need for financial contribution to support research, organization and communication. To confirm our ongoing membership in the coming weeks, a contribution must be authorized before Council meetings pause for Spring Break.

#### Recommendation

- 1. That Council authorize \$5,037.27 for continued membership in the Border Mayors Alliance, and
- 2. That should Council approve this recommendation at Committee of the Whole, the matter be forwarded for consideration at the daytime Council meeting of March 13, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Marianne Alto.