

City of Victoria

# Parks and Open Spaces 2017/2018 Annual Report







## Background

The City of Victoria is located on the traditional territories of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

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.

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. Included in this inventory is over 90 hectares (220 acres) of natural areas including Garry oak meadows, rocky outcrops and coastal bluffs and a variety of amenities including play spaces, sports fields and courts, fitness equipment, dog off-leash areas, lawn bowling greens, plazas, gardens and horticultural displays.

The management of our parks and open spaces is guided by City policies and plans including the Official Community Plan, the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan and the Urban Forest Master Plan.

This report provides an overview of the progress made in 2017/2018 towards implementing the commitments made in the City's strategic documents.





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.

## Parks and Open Spaces Master 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 into the City's parks system for the next 25 years.

**The document sets out a vision, goals and guiding principles in four key areas including:**

- Protecting the environment
- Fostering engaging experiences for everyone
- Celebrating Victoria
- Strengthening partnerships





## **GOAL 1: Protect the Environment**

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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.



## GOAL 1: PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

**There are 12 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, with the goal of protecting the environment.**

### **2017/2018 highlights include:**

- 7,000 staff and 550 volunteer hours spent on improving natural areas including: managing and monitoring species at risk, treating aggressive invasive species, and clearing exotic invasive plants and restoring with native species

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- “Creek-themed” playground installed at Cecelia Ravine Park

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- Designing stormwater management solutions in Redfern Park

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- City grant awarded to support signage raising awareness of Rock Bay Creek

### **GOAL 1 ACTIONS:**

#### **1.1.2**

Continue to implement the Urban Forest Master Plan

#### **1.2.2**

Create demonstration projects showcasing best practices for sustainability within the parks system

#### **1.2.3**

Identify opportunities to daylight or celebrate culverted streams

#### **1.3.3**

Identifying plants and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change and development management strategies to help mitigation strategies

#### **1.3.5**

Reduce impervious surfaces, particularly along the waterfront

**12**

**Total actions in Plan**

**5**

**Number of actions initiated in 2017/18**





## **GOAL 2: Foster Engaging Experiences for Everyone**

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PARKS AND OPEN SPACES PROVIDE A RANGE OF DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES, ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LIVING, AND ARE MULTIFUNCTIONAL, 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.



## GOAL 2: Foster engaging experiences for everyone

**There are 28 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan with the goal of fostering engaging experiences for everyone.**

### 2017/18 highlights include:

- Completed park improvement plans for Cecelia Ravine and Topaz Park
- New washrooms at Cecelia Ravine Park and Clover Point Park
- New support amenities such as drinking fountains and bike racks at Cecelia Ravine Park
- Initiated the Parks Condition Assessment which will help prioritize improvements to park assets
- Designed new gathering spaces for Cecelia Ravine, Topaz Park, Clover Point Park and Ship Point
- Development of the Vic West, Gonzales and Fairfield neighbourhood plans
- Planned renewal of health and fitness clusters within Cecelia Ravine Park and Topaz Park
- Installed new playground equipment at Raynor Park and play features in Centennial Square; planning underway for renewal of Summit Park Playground
- Development of a Parks Signage Strategy
- Improved pathways and lighting in Raynor Park and Cecelia Ravine Park

**28**

**Total Actions  
in Plan**

**13**

**Number of Actions  
initiated in 2017/18**

## GOAL 2: Foster engaging experiences for everyone



### GOAL 2 ACTIONS:

#### 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.

#### 2.1.5

Identify opportunities to incorporate more support amenities such as washrooms, drinking fountains, lighting and food services at select parks.

#### 2.1.6

Establish a list of priority improvement projects to address safety issues and other barriers to park use.

#### 2.2.2

Incorporate a variety of spaces for socializing and group gatherings into parks.

#### 2.2.3

Develop areas in the parks and open spaces system that encourage mental restoration and relaxation.

#### 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.

#### 2.3.2

Establish a target for the provision of play spaces within an 800 metres walking distance of 99% of households.

#### 2.3.3

Establish and maintain standards of care to ensure safe, high quality and creative play features.

#### 2.4.2

Continue to conduct annual meetings with sports league representatives and other user groups.

#### 2.5.1

Incorporate community gardening and related amenities into the parks system.

#### 2.6.1

Create a wayfinding and signage strategy for the parks and open spaces system.

#### 2.6.3

Provide amenities to encourage and support park users who walk and cycle.

#### 2.6.4

Prioritize the development of active transportation linkages and infrastructure that connects residents and visitors to parks.





Mural Painting at Gonzales Beach Park

## GOAL 3: Celebrate Victoria

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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 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.



## GOAL 3: Celebrate Victoria



**There are 8 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan with the goal of celebrating Victoria.**

### **2017/2018 highlights include:**

- Working with the City's Artist in Residence to paint murals on washroom buildings at Gonzales Beach Park, Hollywood Park and Vic West Park and on the staircase on Dallas Road at Cook Street
- Incorporating support infrastructure such as water and electrical connections within the Topaz Park Improvement Plan for special events and festivals
- Planning for new public art in public realm (Johnson Street Bridge)

### **GOAL 3 ACTIONS:**

#### **3.1.5**

Incorporate outdoor art projects and programs into the parks and open spaces system through the existing Artist-in-Residence program.

#### **3.1.7**

Incorporate support infrastructure and amenities at key parks to host special events on a regular basis.

**8**

**Total Actions  
in Plan**

**2**

**Number of Actions  
initiated in 2017/18**





## **GOAL 4: Strengthen Partnerships**

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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. There are also a 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.



## GOAL 4: Strengthen Partnerships

**Within this area of the master plan, there are 5 actions with the goal of strengthening partnerships.**

### 2017/2018 highlights include:

- Development of Park Volunteer Program
- Collaborated with the CRD for public realm improvements along Dallas Road and Clover Point Park
- Partnership with Parks and Recreation Foundation of Victoria for renewal of the Park Furnishings Dedication Program
- Partnered with Songhees First Nation to bid on 2020 North American Indigenous Games
- Partnering with 12 regional municipalities, Tourism Victoria and Sport Tourism in bid to host the 55+ BC Games
- Coordination with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Wild ARC on protocols for wildlife activity in City Parks and Beaches
- Installed new signage to identify Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary at key waterfront locations
- Staff assisted the Province of BC in the renewal of open space at the Courthouse, to create a high-quality community amenity

#### GOAL 4 ACTIONS:

##### 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 lifestyle through joint planning, programming and promotion.

##### 4.1.5

Create a Park Volunteer Policy and Program.

**5**

**Total Actions  
in Plan**

**2**

**Number of Actions  
initiated in 2017/2018**



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 practice and community stewardship.

## Urban Forest Master Plan

The plan identifies 26 recommendations and strategies to be considered by the City for the period 2013-2060 in the management of the urban forest, including trees on public and private lands. As indicated when the Urban Forest Master Plan was approved by Council in 2013, the plan is a high level planning document that looks at the future of the City of Victoria's urban forest through a 50 year vision.



## Urban Forest Master Plan



### 2017/18 highlights include:

- Urban forest considerations incorporated in the Downtown Public Realm Strategy, Victoria West Neighbourhood Plan and draft Gonzales and Fairfield Neighbourhood Plans
- Tree Appreciation Day celebrated with the community, planting 25 trees in the Vic West neighbourhood, an area of the city with low canopy cover
- 328 new trees planted in 2017 including 45 new trees downtown, in Harris Green and along new protected bike lanes
- Water saver system introduced to help combat drought conditions for newly planted trees and to better manage water use
- Approximately 1,500 trees managed on young tree maintenance program
- Assessed 760 mature and over-mature trees identified in City inventory to determine structural integrity



## Urban Forest Master Plan



### Urban Forest Master Plan recommendations actioned include:

**C** Incorporate the goals, policy objectives and strategies of the Urban Forest Master Plan within other relevant City plans, policies, bylaws and development guidelines.

**D** Increase urban forest cover to more optimal levels in neighbourhoods currently exhibiting low canopy cover.

**E** Conserve or replace sufficient greenspace to sustain the urban forest, with particular attention to the needs of large canopy trees.

**J** Systematically map and measure the urban forest on public lands, identifying sites for new planting.

**L** Develop a Tree Risk Management Program for public trees (including a Comprehensive Tree Risk Management Policy and Strategy).

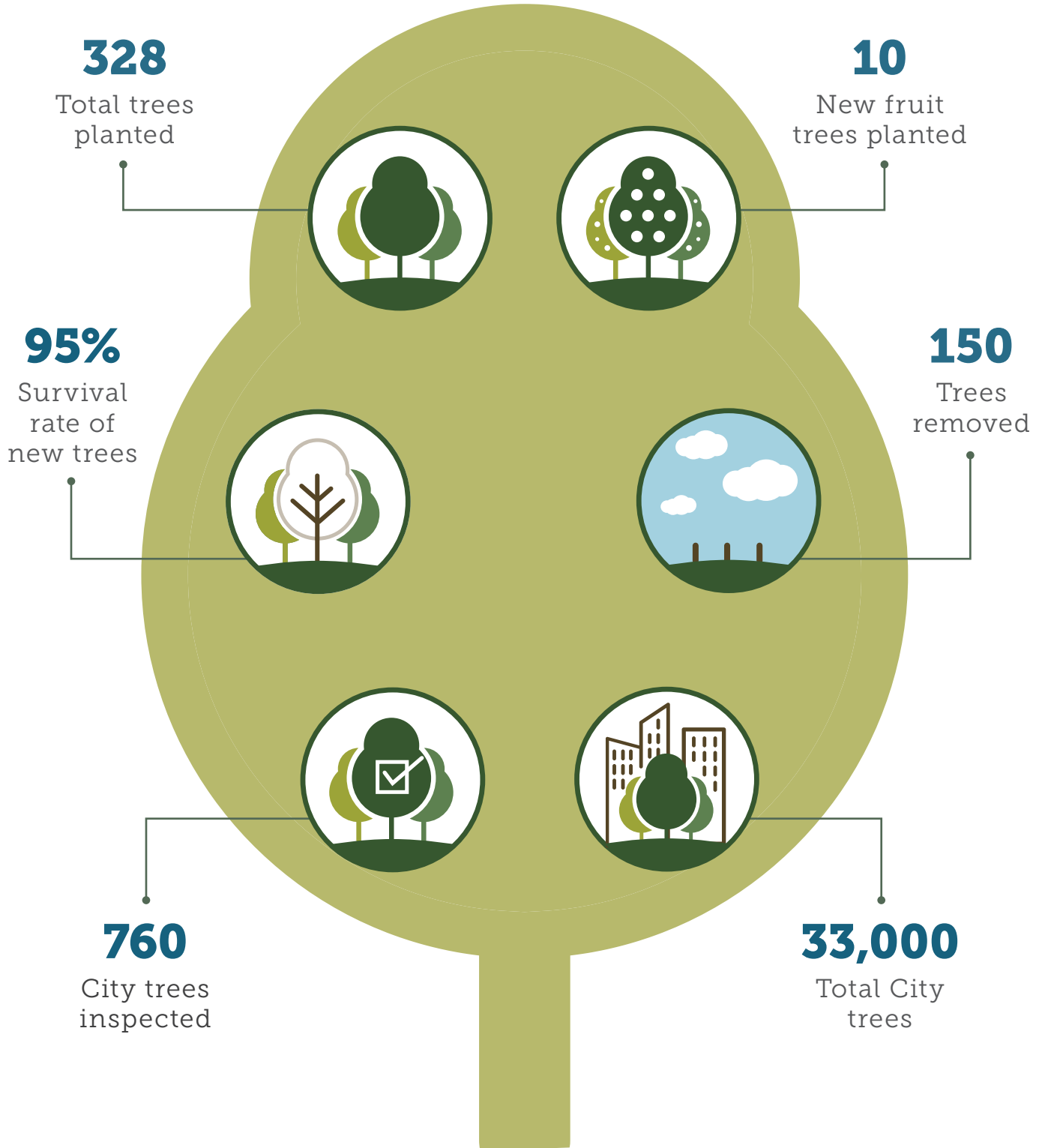
**M** Manage existing mature street trees so as to extend their Safe Useful Life Expectancy (buying time for newer trees to develop and contribute meaningfully to the urban forest canopy).

**N** Continue a vigorous street tree replacement program, select species and locations so as to maximize species and age diversity, be ready for future climates, minimize nuisance and risk, minimize maintenance costs, and maximize green infrastructure and other benefits.

**O** Make young tree care a high priority within the municipal forestry program.



Urban Forest Master Plan  
2017 Metrics





## Growing in the City

One of the objectives in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan is to encourage community gardening and local food production by providing multigenerational, collaborative opportunities for learning and growing.

The Growing in the City Initiative was a key project for the City in 2015/16 and was intended to expand community gardening and urban food production opportunities within the city.





### 2017/18 highlights include:

#### New Community Gardens

- Worked with community partners on four new community gardens:
    - Yates Street (Downtown, allotment)
    - James Bay New Horizons (James Bay, commons)
    - Neighbourhood Garden of all Sorts (James Bay, allotment)
    - Franklin Green (North Park, commons)
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#### Urban Food Tree Stewardship Pilot Program

- 10 new food trees planted in various parks and open spaces in the James Bay neighbourhood
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#### Urban Food Production Business Licensing

- Four licenses were issued including three for urban farming businesses such as TopSoil at Dockside Green and Mason Street Farm
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#### Educational / Resource Documents

- Four new fact sheets/guidelines on gardening in the public realm
- Feature map with inventory of City-owned land with community gardening potential added to VicMap and made available to the public
- Four new fact sheets, new application form and new webpage on commercial urban food production

#### PLANNED FOR 2018:

- A review of and report back on the existing programs as identified in the original project approvals
- The development of voluntary guidelines for mixed-use, multi-family developments
- Two public workshops on urban food production and boulevard gardening

## CLOSING STATEMENT

This report is a snapshot of progress on the goals and actions outlined in City strategic plans and programs. For more information please visit our website at [www.victoria.ca/parks](http://www.victoria.ca/parks).

