



Attachment A



City of Victoria

Parks and Open Spaces 2019 Annual Report





Introduction

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People.

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, relaxation, play, learning, and connecting with nature. They are an important contributor to quality of life, supporting the physical, social, ecological and economic health of the city and its residents.

Victoria's parks and open spaces encompass 209 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 parks and open spaces is guided by City policies and plans including the Official Community Plan, Climate Leadership Plan, the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan and the Urban Forest Master Plan.

This report provides an overview of the progress made in 2019 towards implementing the commitments made in the City's strategic documents.



VISION STATEMENT

Victoria's parks and open spaces system is dynamic, vibrant, 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 in the City's parks system.

The Master Plan 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

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.

In March 2019, Council joined leaders from the region and around the world in declaring a Climate Emergency. Parks and open spaces are being impacted by climate change, but natural assets can help with adaptation as well. The City is taking action now to identify risks and develop strategies to mitigate negative impacts and boost the community's resilience.

There are 12 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan associated with protecting the environment.

Highlights from 2019 include:

- 5,300 staff and 435 volunteer hours contributed to maintaining natural areas, including: managing and monitoring species at risk, removing invasive species, and restoring with native species.
- Naturalization of 62 locations in parks and open spaces.
- Developed a plant selection list that includes adaptable plants that are drought-tolerant, pest/disease resistant, pollinator-friendly, are native to the region, have aesthetic value, are lower maintenance and are low-allergen.
- Adjusted operational practices to shift organic fertilizers, use electric equipment, reduce single-use plastics and increase the propagation and cultivation of native plants.
- Developed a concept design for Songhees Park with Garry Oak and Arbutus tree habitats in an ecological restoration of the land.
- Planted 425 new trees on public property, including 30 new trees downtown.
- Nurtured approximately 1,700 trees on the City's young tree maintenance program.
- Updated the Tree Preservation Bylaw to protect approximately 50% of the existing private tree population and nine times more trees than under the previous bylaw.
- Developed an implementation plan for the Urban Forest Master Plan to complete high-priority recommendations over the next five years.
- Installed 1,500 pollinator-friendly plants in boulevards along Esquimalt Road in Vic West, adjacent to the Johnson Street Bridge.
- Added five new mason bee hive installations in Beacon Hill Park.



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.

The parks and open spaces system must be adaptive to meet the changing needs of residents. Among the most critical factors are the increasing population; the aging population; the desire to attract families; the changes in demand and new activities; and the challenge of expanding the parks and open spaces system in a largely built-out and geographically constrained city.

There are 28 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan relating to fostering engaging experiences for everyone.

Highlights from 2019 include:

- Acquired two acres of land located at Laurel Point, to expand City waterfront parkland in James Bay.
- Added new community amenities, including new playground, fitness equipment, multi-use pathway and washroom at Cecelia Ravine Park in Burnside-Gorge.
- Renewed the playground at Summit Park and constructed a new pathway, providing access into the park from McNair Street in Hillside-Quadra.
- Installed 28 new benches as a part of the Park Furnishing Dedication program.
- Renewed 5 sport courts at Beacon Hill Park and Hollywood Park.
- Initiated significant park improvement projects for Peter Pollen Waterfront Park, Songhees Park and Topaz Park.
- Hosted boulevard gardening tours and workshops for 250 people.
- Revised City grants to help reduce barriers and encourage community gardening activities in all neighbourhoods.
- Upgraded an east/west connector pathway in Beacon Hill Park to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Published the Lower Allergen Plant List and the Allergy-Friendly Gardening Factsheet and posted on City website.
- Published a guide to encourage urban gardening and food production in mixed use, multi-unit residential developments.
- Completed the Parks Condition Assessment, which will help prioritize improvements to park assets.
- Processed 4,000 park space bookings for sport tournaments and league games.
- Hosted 133 events special events in Parks.
- Hosted the 16th Annual Vic West (VeeDub) skateboard competition, a Skateboard Canada sanctioned event for athletes qualifying for the National Team and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.



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 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.

There are 8 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan to celebrate Victoria.

Highlights from 2019 include:

- Honoured Gretchen Brewin, Victoria's first female mayor, by planting a new Garry Oak in Beacon Hill Park's Mayor's Grove.
- Unveiled murals
- Collaborated with local First Nation representatives on educational, cultural, and art opportunities as part of the Songhees Park Expansion Project.
- Opened seating on the new waterfront plaza next to the Johnson Street Bridge in Vic West.
- Celebrated the 14th annual Tree Appreciation Day with the community in Beacon Hill Park.
- Renamed waterfront Park in James Bay in honour of former Mayor Peter Pollen.



GOAL 4: Strengthen Partnerships

COMMUNITY MEMBERS, STEWARDS AND PARTNERS HELP ENHANCE ALL PARKS AND OPEN SPACES IN THE CITY.

There is a significant number of residents and volunteer organizations that contribute to the improvement of open spaces across the city, from neighbourhood associations, and environmental stewardship groups, to other service providers and government organizations. The City will need to continue to play a proactive role to build partnerships, support volunteers, coordinate efforts, and maximize the use of parks and other open spaces.

There are 5 actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan associated with the goal of strengthening partnerships.

Highlights from 2019 include:

- Awarded the right to host the 55+ BC Games in collaboration with 12 regional municipalities, Tourism Victoria and the Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission.
- Collaborated with the Growing Young Farmers Society to host camps encouraging and empowering kids to grow and eat healthy organic food in an urban setting.
- Working jointly with School District 61 on the planning and design of an artificial turf sport field at Victoria Highschool.
- Collaborating with the representatives of local First Nations to incorporate elements of Lekwungen culture into parks and open spaces.
- Collaborated with the CRD Wastewater Treatment Project team to deliver public realm improvements along Dallas Road and Clover Point Park.
- Collaborated with Transport Canada to improve the environmental health of public Waterfront Park in James Bay.
- Engaged with community advocates to strengthen the stewardship of the urban forest.



CLOSING STATEMENT

This report is a snapshot of progress on the goals and actions outlined in supporting parks and open spaces. For more information please visit www.victoria.ca/parks.



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